A HISTORY

OF

ENGLISH POETRY

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THE CONSTITUTIONAL COMPROMISE OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

EFFECTS OF THE CLASSICAL RENAISSANCE; ITS ZENITH AND DECLINE. THE EARLY ROMANTIC RENAISSANCE

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PREFATORY NOTE

In view of comments which have been made on previous volumes of this history, I would again remind the reader that my design from the first has been, not to furnish an exhaustive list of the English poets as individuals, but rather to describe the general movements of English Poetry, as an Art illustrating the evolution of national taste.[1] The poets whose works are here considered are treated as having contributed something characteristic towards these movements; but I have not thought it necessary to dwell on the lives and writings of versifiers such as Ambrose Philips, Beattie, Aaron Hill, and others, whose names appear in collections like those of Anderson and Chalmers; their poetry having too little distinctive character for my purpose.

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CHAPTER I

EFFECTS OF THE CLASSICAL RENAISSANCE ON MODERN EUROPEAN POETRY

THROUGHOUT this history I have used the word "Renaissance" to express a twofold regeneration, political and literary.[1] The term is often employed to signify simply the Revival of Greek Art and Letters in Europe after the taking of Constantinople by the Turks But Greek form, as such, had no power of renewing its own life. The life of the best Greek poetry, architecture, and sculpture was itself the spiritual offspring of Greek genius, nurtured by the social liberty and the free institutions of independent city states at the period of their highest vigour; and when that liberty and those institutions perished, Greek art and literature sank into sterility. They survived indeed in the larger form of Roman citizenship, and were carried by the arms of the Imperial City into all the provinces of the Roman Empire. There the arts of ancient civilisation lingered amidst the decaying fabric of society till, as Collins, addressing the spirit of Freedom, says—

Rome, before thy weeping face,
With heaviest sound, a giant statue fell,
Pushed by a wild and artless race
From off its wide ambitious base,
When Time his northern sons of spoil awoke,
And all the blended work of strength and grace,
With many a rude repeated stroke,
And many a barbarous yell, to thousand fragments broke.

[1] Vol. i. chaps. i. ii. and v., and vol. ii. chap. i.

Amid the universal ruin the traditions of municipal order were preserved, and formed the basis of the new civilisation. Rising on the remains of their ancient foundations, fortified by the prestige of Rome, now the centre of Christianity, but still the repository of the great memories of the past, the cities of Italy rebuilt their walls, trained a civic militia, and successfully defended their liberties, by united league, alike against their barbarous feudal neighbours and their German over-lord. As they advanced in prosperity they began, like their Greek predecessors, to adorn life with the arts of expression. But the forms that they employed resembled only in their essence of liberty those of the free Greeks of antiquity, and were modified by all the historic transmutations which the human spirit had since experienced. The degenerate tradition of Hellenic art had indeed, during the barbarous ages, passed from Byzantium to Venice, to the cities of the Western Coast of Italy, and even to Rome itself, but it had been adapted to suit the new requirements of Christianity, and the impulses of free invention in the now mixed races of Latins, Goths, and Lombards. The old Roman basilica had changed into the Christian Church, and on apse or triforium were represented images of the new religion as vivid, though not of course as beautiful, as the sculptures on the frieze of the Parthenon. To the nations of the north, Byzanto-Gothic, Lombardo-Roman, Norman-Arab modifications of ancient civil and religious architecture were being constantly carried, there to be developed into new forms of beauty and sublimity. In all the cities of Europe, whose defensive walls still indicated the presence of barbarous neighbours, municipal halls and market-houses, half-feudal, half-ecclesiastical in their structure, testified to the advance of commerce and civilisation. New languages, formed out of the decay of Latin and the changing speech of the Teutonic invaders, had reached a point of refinement at which it was possible to use them as vehicles for general ideas; and already the *Divine Comedy* and the *Decameron* in Italy, the *Romance of the Rose* in France, and *The Canterbury Tales* in

England, marked the characteristic divergencies of thought amongst the infant nations of modern Europe.

Hence, long before the era of the Classical Renaissance, properly so called, an early Civic Renaissance had, by the natural operation of free institutions, created, amidst feudal and ecclesiastical surroundings, independent societies, whether in the form of city states, or of nations, each with an intellectual character of its own, formed, without reference to the old Hellenic canons, out of Roman traditions of art and such literary models as had been preserved in the encyclopædic education of the Church Schools.[1] After 1453, however, the Revival of Ancient Learning began to operate on these communities. By the light of recovered MSS. men were enabled to acquaint themselves directly with the free civic spirit animating the monuments of classic antiquity, and to use Greek and Roman art for the purposes either of original invention or of submissive imitation. Whether that reproduction was free or servile depended on the political character of the particular society within which the Renaissance worked. This effect is so uniform and so strongly marked that it can be described with precision.

As regards the spirit of the Classical Renaissance: wherever it operated on a community in which the love of liberty was strongly developed, there the ancient civic spirit combined readily with modern ideas, and the effect was to stimulate, and at the same time to refine, artistic invention.

Wherever, on the contrary, the civic spirit had made only a little way against a predominant Ecclesiasticism and Feudalism, there the Classical Renaissance failed to strike deep root or greatly to modify the mediæval character of thought and expression.

As regards the Renaissance of Greek form: in proportion as the spirit of civic freedom was strong in any society, the effect of the Revival of Learning was to encourage the use of classical models for criticising and correcting, without supplanting, the forms of the early and spontaneous national art.

[1] Vol. i. pp. 24-26, and pp. 161-162.

But in proportion as the spirit of liberty decayed in any modern society, the Classical Renaissance either encouraged imaginative anarchy, or caused Greek and Roman forms, pure and simple, to supersede the mixed forms which had been invented by the free energy of national character.

In order to follow the course of poetical development in the present volume, it will first be necessary to revert, in a brief retrospect, to the working of these principles on the rising poetry of Italy, France, and England. The poetry of Spain and Germany need not at present detain our attention, because, in the former country, the civic spirit, suppressed by the Inquisition in alliance with Absolutism, made but little advance ; while, in the latter, the anarchical forces of Feudalism and religious war prevented the establishment of anything like civil self-government. But in the three other countries the effects of the Classical Renaissance on the art of poetry are most various and instructive, and in Italy particularly, which took the lead in modern European civilisation, and where the conditions of life most nearly resembled those of the ancient Greek States, the evolution of the forces I have mentioned presents phenomena of striking regularity.

The intimate connection between the life of the Greek city and the life of Greek art and criticism has been thus suggestively pointed out by an eminent English scholar :—

In the poetical schools of Greece reflection had been at work and discussion rife for centuries before the Periclean era. Literary forms or types were created—epic, lyric, dramatic, elegiac—which have stood the test of time and become the accepted models of the Western world. Behind the activity of creative genius a ceaseless critical effort was at work controlling and inspiring poetic invention. Standards of writing were formed, canons of taste laid down, and the great problem of reconciling tradition with freedom of development was in process of solution. Meanwhile the variations of literary type answered to the living forces operating in society. The poets followed close upon the movements of the race and the people. Their "invention," their originality, consisted chiefly in vitalising old material, in interpreting the legends in the light of the present, in recreating

and ever renewing the marvellous history of the past. To make old things seem new and new things seem familiar was one main function of their art.[1]

Precisely on the same lines of spontaneous civic development was laid the structure of poetical form and diction in mediæval Italy. Dante (1265-1321), for example, declares that what he calls the "Illustrious Vulgar Tongue" must be grounded on a selection, by the best writers, of words used in the various spoken dialects of Italy.

Just as a Vulgar Tongue (says he, in his scholastic manner) is to be found belonging to Cremona, so can one be found belonging to Lombardy; and just as one can be found belonging to Lombardy, so one can be found belonging to the whole of the left side of Italy. And just as all these can be found, so also can that be found which belongs to the whole of Italy. And just as the first is called Cremonese, the second Lombard, and the third semi-Italian, so that which belongs to the whole of Italy is called the Italian Vulgar Tongue. For this has been used by the illustrious writers who have written poetry in the vernacular throughout Italy.[2]

As to the thoughts which are expressed in this Illustrious Vulgar Tongue, we find in the *Divine Comedy* the strangest mixture of images, partly borrowed from the Scriptures or from the Latin authors whose works are allowed by the Church to be studied, and partly derived from actual life in the cities of Italy. In the *Inferno*, for example, Farinata degli Uberti[3] and Ciacco,[4] of Florence, appear in the same region with Minos, Geryon, the Minotaur, and Chiron; while, even in the *Purgatorio*, the names of Niobe, Arachne, and Alcmæon are impartially mixed with those of Nimrod, Rehoboam, and Sennacherib.[5] A not dissimilar spirit makes the commentator Lombardi blame Dante's interpreters for ascribing to Hercules, instead of to the Saviour, the exploit of binding Cerberus![6] Such were the "Gothic and monkish foundations"—to

[1] *Harvard Lectures on Greek Subjects*, by S. H. Butcher, pp. 171-172.
[2] Dante, *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, book i. chap. xxx. Translation by A. G. F. Howell.
[3] *Inferno*, Canto x. [4] *Ib.* Canto vi. [5] *Purgatorio*, Canto xii.
[6] *Inferno*, Canto ix. pp. 98-99. Note of P. Bonaventura Lombardi (1791).

use the phrase of Burke—on which arose the structure of the early civilisation of Italy.

Passing from the work of Dante to the work of Ariosto (1474-1533), we breathe a changed atmosphere. The Classical has supervened on the Civic Renaissance. Dante wrote when the cities of Italy still enjoyed their ancient liberties. Even in the beginning of the sixteenth century Italy was far from having abandoned all aspirations for the greatness of that golden past. No doubt the time was close at hand when the armies of France, Spain, and Germany, would cross the sea or the Alps to do battle with each other for her fairest provinces; no doubt the Popes had turned from their high spiritual ambitions to the lust of temporal and territorial sway. Still the memories of the great days of the Lombard League survived, and men of action, like Machiavelli, could dream of freeing the soil of Italy from foreign usurpation by the enrolment of a civic militia. With the usual *clairvoyance* of his countrymen, Ariosto understood the decadence of liberty and morals in the Republics of Italy, but he contrived, even in an age of despots, to preserve that feeling of personal dignity and independence—characteristic of the best kind of Humanism—which he expressed in the inscription on his house at Ferrara:—

> Parva, sed apta mihi, sed nulli obnoxia, sed non
> Sordida, parta meo sed tamen aere, domus.

And the same feeling of refined simplicity animates his poetical style. He writes in the conversational idiom of the Illustrious Vulgar Tongue, as it has come down to him from his predecessors, Pulci and Boiardo. Though there is no appearance of effort or strangeness in his diction, we know that, in fact, each of his stanzas was polished with the most studious pains. His language is that neither of the Schoolman nor of the unsophisticated citizen, but of the Courtier; the audience he addresses is the group of ladies and gentlemen, gathered every evening in the Duke of Ferrara's palace, to listen, with an understanding smile, to the poet's gravely ironic recitation of

romantic marvels. Yet there is a lettered air in his courtly colloquial ease. The *Orlando Furioso* contains almost as strange a medley of classical and romantic elements as the *Divina Commedia*. But the old *naïveté*, characteristic of Dante's style, has disappeared; all incongruities are reconciled by the apparent seriousness of the poet, who is ready to justify the greatest improbabilities in his narrative by the authority of the historian: "So says Turpin." Here we see the Classical Renaissance working in its most salutary form of self-criticism.

A great difference, both in feeling and form, is manifest when we pass from the work of Ariosto to that of Tasso (1544-1595), the representative Italian poet of the next generation. The *Gerusalemme Liberata* was composed in the atmosphere of the age immediately following the Council of Trent—that is to say, at a time when the Pope, allied with the Spaniards, dominated the spiritual and local liberties of Italy. I have already shown how extensively the form of the *Jerusalem* was modified through fear of the Inquisition.[1] But not less noticeable is the air of self-conscious embarrassment in which Tasso speaks of the artistic treatment of his epic materials. It is evident, from his exposition of poetical method, that he felt the strong tendency in the romantic and classic elements of his work to part company. Ariosto, without any declaration of principle, had fused these contrary forces by his sense of artistic propriety; but Tasso places his own constructive difficulties immediately before the judgment of the reader. He says, with a logic as academic as Dante's is scholastic:—

The argument of an epic poem ought then to be taken from *Histories*; but History is either of a religion held false by us, or of a religion which we believe to be true, such as is to-day the Christian Religion, or as was formerly the Jewish; nor do I think that the actions of the Heathen afford us a fitting subject for the construction of a perfect epic poem, because in such poems we either need to have recourse sometimes to the gods who were worshipped by the heathen, or there is no need for us to do so;

[1] Vol. iii. pp. 112-115.

and, in the latter case, there is a want in the poem of the marvellous element, while, in the former, the poem is to this extent deprived of the quality of verisimilitude. Little pleasure can, indeed, be derived from a poem that does not contain those marvels, which have such power to excite the minds not only of the ignorant, but even of the judicious; I mean magic rings, enchanted shields, flying horses, ships changed into nymphs, phantoms which pass to and fro between the combatants, and other inventions of the kind; with which a writer of judgment ought to flavour his poem as with condiments; since with these he allures and delights the taste of the ordinary reader, not only without the disgust, but even with the approval, of the more enlightened.[1]

In other words, the *Jerusalem* is composed upon a double principle, being intended, as far as the selection of subject and the main outlines of form go, to satisfy the authorities of the Church, but in the method of treatment to meet the requirements of the general reader. To please the former Tasso proceeded on classic principles, to please the latter on romantic. But he scarcely succeeds in reconciling the opposing forces; for there is an obvious inconsistency between the main historical action of his poem, represented by Godfrey of Bouillon, and the fanciful episodes, represented by Rinaldo and Armida, Tancred and Clorinda. So too in respect of his diction. Driven in one direction by his desire to imitate the Classics, he departs from the natural idiom of the Vulgar Tongue to copy the manner of Virgil; in another he indulges the taste of the reader with the extravagant *concetti* recommended by the example of Petrarch and Ariosto.

Yet in Tasso the equilibrium of art is by no means destroyed; the reader of the *Jerusalem* can still admire a true nobility and chastity of style. It is only in the next generation, the age of the Spanish Viceroys, that we see the full effects of the loss of civic liberty on Italian poetry. The two contrary tendencies I have spoken of are now carried to their fullest extreme. In one direction there arose a wild passion for novelty, indulged at the expense of reason and good taste, the fruits

[1] Translated from *Discorsi Poetici*, i.

of which were the works of Marino (1569-1625) and his disciples. Marino deliberately broke every rule with regard to conception and execution that Tasso had laid down for the observance of the epic poet. The author of the *Jerusalem* prescribes that the subject matter of the epic should be chosen from Christian history; Marino takes the argument of his *Adone* from Pagan mythology, thus from the very outset depriving his poem of verisimilitude. He trusts to that universal delight in the marvellous of which Tasso speaks; but he neglects to observe that the pleasure of the judicious reader of the *Orlando Furioso* comes from the sub-tone of mockery in which Ariosto treats such supernatural "machines" as "magic rings, enchanted shields, flying horses," and the like. All Marino's powers are concentrated on the invention of episodes; he takes no pains to avoid the air of "disproportion and excess" condemned by Tasso; but rather endeavours through 40,000 lines to conceal the inanity of his subject by a dazzling succession of details, and by the pyrotechny of perpetual metaphors, hyperboles, and antitheses. The effects produced by the Renaissance on the taste of a nation which has lost its liberty are clearly illustrated by his poem; in it the genius of Anarchy reigns supreme; Christianity, Chivalry, Civic Order, are submerged in a deluge of Paganism. A still more extravagant variation of the same spirit may be observed in the *Roccella Espugnata* of Bracciolini, an epic poem on the *contemporary* siege of La Rochelle, in which (among other absurdities) the Duke of Buckingham is represented as landing on a magic island in pursuit of Roxana, one of the heroines, and as being encountered with all the enchantments enumerated by Tasso![1]

While the idea of action thus declined in the narrative forms of poetry invented by the Italians, the effects of the Classical Renaissance, working in a decayed society, are vividly seen in the style of their lyric verse. Dante and Petrarch had given a genuinely classic form to romantic sentiment in the Sonnet and Canzone; but long before

[1] *La Roccella Espugnata* (1630), Canto VIII.

the close of the sixteenth century the mixed civic and chivalric source of inspiration was exhausted, and throughout the seventeenth century the skill of the lyric poet was turned to the task of inventing new modes of flattery for the despots of the time. For this purpose the poets looked for models in the literature of antiquity; hence, side by side with the Marinistic extravagance of epic poetry, we find an attempt, in the panegyrical poetry of the period, to cover pettiness of subject with an appearance of loftiness and severity of classical lyric form.

The poetry of Gabriel Chiabrera (1552-1637) furnishes the most striking example of the imitation of Hellenic forms in the absence of the Hellenic spirit. He attempted to adapt the style of Pindar (greatest lyric poet of the great age of Greek liberty), with all its rich mythological allusion, to the courts of the Italian princelets. The result may be seen in the structure of any of his Odes. In 1618, for example, the Grand Duke Cosmo of Tuscany indulged a fancy for reviving in his duchy the game of ball. To celebrate the occasion Chiabrera invokes Melpomene; he traces the origin of the game back to Greece, and then invites the Muse to say what kind of crown befits the conquerors in the strife. Melpomene tells him the story of a young hunter, who, for despising the proffer of love by a nymph, was turned by Cybele into a tree, from the leaves of which are woven the crown of victory in the game. The poet is careful to conclude with the reflection that, though Clio rewards with but a small prize those who sing in her service, Cosmo, whose light makes all Italy resplendent, whose glory even envy must revere, will reward the singer with a crown of gold.[1] Such is the matter which is handled with classic regularity, though in this instance without the strophe, antistrophe, and epode of the Pindaric ode; and indeed it will readily be granted that justice could hardly have been done to such a subject in the Illustrious Vulgar Tongue, as metrically framed by Dante.

Another very ingenious, and often admirable, Italian

[1] *Rime del Chiabrera, Canzoni Eroiche* lxii.

poet, Fulvio Testi (1593-1646), imitated the external manner of Horace, and adapted it to the service of the various princes who patronised him. A Court poet is necessarily obliged to produce flattering poetry, and excellent models of well-bred flattery were to be found in Horace; but imitation has its decent limits, and what might be feigned of Augustus, the master of the Roman world, could hardly be repeated with propriety of Philip IV. of Spain. Testi, however, does not hesitate to write of the latter:—

O Re di Regi, il cui diffuso impero
A gran pena del Sol l' occhio misura,
Al cui scettro Natura
Partorì fuor del Mondo un Mondo intero,
Non isdegnar d' oscura
E pellegrina cetra il suon, che stride,
Nè ti turbar, s' a te fo pari Alcide.

L' Idra che da più capi orrendi e crudi
Vomitò di velen spume mortali,
E, feconda di mali,
Tutte infettò le Belgiche paludi,
Trionfo è de' tuoi strali;
Ed or dell' empie teste i tronchi scemi
Dan su i liti d' Olanda i guizzi estremi.[1]

Although the operation of the Classical Renaissance in France was inwardly the same as in Italy, its external effects were different in form and character. The flood of barbaric invasion had equally overspread both countries, but France lacked what Italy possessed, an abundance of cities to form the nucleus of a new civil order. Feudal institutions, therefore, took strong root in the French Kingdom, and the movement of civilisation there resolved itself into a struggle between the King and his Great Vassals. Gradually, though very slowly, the Monarchical power gained the upper hand; but when the refining influence of

[1] King of Kings, whose wide Empire the Sun's eye scarcely measures, for whose sceptre Nature brought forth a whole world beyond the world, disdain not the sound that rises from an obscure and foreign lyre, nor be angry if I compare thee with Alcides. The Hydra that from many horrid and cruel heads vomited deadly foam of venom, and, fruitful of evils, infected all the Belgic marshes, is the victim of your arrows; and now the trunks, severed from her impious heads, writhe in dying struggles on the shores of Holland.—Translated from *Opere Scelte del Conte De Fulvio Testi* (1817), p. 110.

the new Learning passed northwards from Italy, the contest between the rival forces was far from being decided.

The character of this internal struggle is spiritually reflected in the development of the French language and literature. In treating of the early Renaissance in France, I dwelt on the opposition of thought running through the two parts of the *Roman de la Rose*[1]; and I afterwards showed how this twofold stream of conflicting principle was carried on with Machault, Eustace Deschamps, and Charles of Orleans, as the representatives of Feudalism, with Coquillart and Villon, as the spokesmen of the bourgeoisie, down to the time when the Court of Francis I. began to form a social centre capable of assimilating and reproducing the refining spirit of the Italian Renaissance.[2] The question then was whether the traditional forms of speech, preserved in old literary monuments, should be polished by the conversation of the Court, or whether, in the spirit of the grammarians, the language should be stereotyped according to literary models, Greek, Latin, and Italian, apart from the vulgar colloquial usage. Francis I. leant, with Marot (1495-1544), to the former alternative; Charles IX. and Henri III. inclined to the side of Ronsard (1524-1585) and the Pleiad, whose ideas were also favoured by most of the French aristocracy.[3] For a long time the strong sectional currents in society caused the national instinct to waver between the opposite ideals of the Feudal and Bourgeois parties; but after the appearance of Malherbe the movement of things in France turned the taste of the people strongly to the side of the latter; and the Court, instinctively, threw its influence into the same scale. Precisely at the time when the Bourbon dynasty began to bear down the opposition of the Feudal nobility and the political liberties of the Huguenots, the critical and intellectual portion of society began to determine the limits of French taste; and as Henri IV., Richelieu, and Mazarin, successively advanced the power of the Crown, so did Malherbe (1555-1628), Corneille (1606-1664),

[1] Vol. i. pp. 176-185. [2] Vol. ii. pp. 38-42.
[3] *Ibid.* pp. 180-181.

and the chiefs of the Academy, prescribe, one after another, the rules for French literary and dramatic composition. The romantic coteries of the Hôtel Rambouillet, on the other hand, formed the Fronde both of politics and poetry.

Under Louis XIV. and the literary dictatorship of Boileau (1636-1711), the centralising tendency in French history reached its climax, alike in the State and in Literature. There was nothing servile in the character of French Absolutism. When Louis XIV. declared, "L'État c'est moi," he was only expressing epigrammatically the genius of his nation, which impelled Frenchmen, following the strongest bent in their race, instinctively to group their own brilliant qualities round the person of their Monarch. Louis XIV. was the representative of the movement towards national unity which had been always increasing in strength since the days of Louis XI. He was practically the head of the Gallican Church. He was also the feudal chief of the French nobility, whose political power he had destroyed; and while the brilliancy of their manners gave an unequalled splendour to his Court, the victories of Condé and Turenne showed what the ancient chivalry, joined with the impetuous valour of the people, could accomplish in the service of the Crown

In like manner the Classicism of Boileau did not involve any such servile imitation of Greek and Roman forms as is found in the poets of the Italian decadence. Boileau, like the French monarchs, grounded his dictatorial edicts on the historic tendencies of French popular taste. His advice to the French poet is "Étudiez la cour, et connaissez la ville."[1] And his idea of the "good sense" which he advocates in the composition of French poetry consists in the refinement—through the study of the classic spirit in the best ancient authors—of the native metrical forms which had sprung into spontaneous existence in the early days of unconscious inspiration. He concurred with Dante in making the spoken language of the day the groundwork of the "Illustrious Vulgar Tongue." And undoubtedly this principle, consciously

[1] *Art Poétique*, Chant iii. 391.

or unconsciously applied, determined the character of the greatest age of French literary creation. The latter half of the seventeenth century witnessed the production of the Tragedies of Racine (1638-1699), the Comedies of Molière (1622-1673), the Fables and Tales of La Fontaine (1621-1695), the Satires of Boileau, the Sermons of Bossuet (1627-1704), the Memoirs of De Retz (1614-1679), the Maxims of La Rochefoucauld (1613-1680), the Letters of Madame de Sévigné (1626-1696). In all directions the spirit of the Renaissance, co-operating with the Monarchical tendencies of the people, guided French instinct to attain a fine balance of classical expression.

Nevertheless, to a reflective observer, looking beneath the surface of this perfection of form, there was much in the reign of Louis XIV. that might have caused anxiety for the future. No doubt, as the absolute supremacy of the Crown had been attained only by a prolonged struggle, the machinery of government it had evolved, and the forms of art it had created, were still full of vigour and vitality. But in the internecine conflict of the social elements there had been no principle of compromise. The Huguenots had been politically extirpated; the nobility had been crushed; so that whatever of individual energy and local liberty sprang from the Reformation and the Feudal System no longer contributed to the life of the State. In the earlier stages of French literature, while the country was still distracted by civil and religious war, the lyric note of lofty religious and moral feeling is distinctly audible, and to a foreigner it seems that the most sublime heights of French poetry are reached in the *Discours des misères de ce temps* of Ronsard, and the *Tragiques* of D'Aubigné. But these are wanting in the art and finish characteristic of the national ideal, to secure which the great representative writers of the seventeenth century were prepared sternly to sacrifice the eccentricities of individual liberty. Malherbe set himself to define the limits within which the French Muse was supreme, and to prescribe the manner in which her various functionaries must perform their duties. Under the absolute *régime* of

Logic and Criticism, the old lyrical impulse died out so rapidly that, two generations later, Boileau could with confidence declare *ex cathedra* that the production of a modern religious epic was a poetical impossibility. Within the provinces regarded as belonging to the legitimate empire of Imagination, French taste had been trained to recognise, with perfect precision, the different proprieties of form; but it was with Poetry as with the State. Louis XIV. might indeed say with justice "L'État c'est moi"; but he did not trouble himself to anticipate how that principle would work if applied by degenerate successors; the same may be said of the critical dictatorship of Boileau; under the influence of the Renaissance, French creative invention had, within a limited area, attained so nice an equilibrium that it was impossible, as far as poetry was concerned, to make a forward move without destroying the balance of Classical Art.

In England the effects of the Classical Renaissance long remained indeterminate. The insular position of the country encouraged the centrifugal movement that ended in its separation from the Papal system. On the other hand, the temper of the people was always singularly receptive of ideas from without, and, while the reformed constitution of Church and State was still in a wavering condition, little progress was made in developing a clear form of national expression. On the whole the strongest factor in the sphere of imagination, till about the time of the Spanish Armada, was the Humanism of which Bembo was the exponent, and which aimed principally at mere external imitation of the classics. Wyatt and Surrey acclimatised the Petrarcan fashion. Ascham, Harvey, and many others wished to make our prosody conform syllabically to quantity instead of to accent and rhyme; Italian models were looked for in all directions by those who attempted to refine the language on the lines of classical antiquity.[1]

[1] Many examples of the Italianising movement are given in vol. ii. of this History. Occasionally I seem to have understated the force of this tendency. For instance, on p. 169, I have said that Gascoigne adapted the *Phœnissæ* of

By degrees an idea of National Unity began to be formed, lofty and distinct enough to demand an equivalent vehicle of poetical diction; and several experiments in metrical composition were made which proved capable of development. In one direction Spenser embodied his allegory of a Court combining, under the rule of a supreme Sovereign, the opposing principles of Scholasticism, Protestantism, and Chivalry. Since his fundamental ideas were based on Chivalry and the Reformed Religion, he instinctively turned for his vocabulary to the ancient sources of the language; but, for the purposes of Court refinement, he sought to blend these antiquities with fashions of diction imitated from the classical poets. The general effect of his style was romantically beautiful; but as Chivalry was in itself a decaying force, and as Pagan mythology could not be harmonised with the truth of the Christian faith, the artificial character of his workmanship is often too obvious. I have given an example of these incompatibilities in the description of the Angel in Book ii. Canto viii. of *The Faery Queen.*[1] Three-quarters of a century elapsed before the conflicting principles, which struggled for mastery in the imagination of Spenser, were reconciled by the art of Milton; and in the result achieved by that supreme poet we note that the principle of the Renaissance has gained the upper hand: the form of *Paradise Lost* is imitated from the *Æneid.*

During the seventeenth century the conflict of opposing constitutional principles operated on the art of English poetry (as I have endeavoured to show in the third volume of this History) not less powerfully than the force of Absolutism operated in France. In England Religion exerted a predominating influence in the political struggle, and, separated as the nation was from the Spiritual Empire of the Papacy, the antagonism of interests was marked by much cross division. Through-

Euripides in his *Jocasta.* But it has been pointed out by Mr. Förster of Chicago University that Gascoigne's play is a mere *translation* of Lodovico Dolce's *Jocasta.* Dolce apparently influenced several English writers towards the end of the eleventh century, and particularly Lodge (*Modern Philology*, vol. ii. No. 1, June 1904).

[1] See vol. ii. pp. 286-287.

out the first half of the century the main opposition lay between the King on the one side, as head alike of the National Church and of the Feudal System, aided by the Episcopacy and the larger part of the nobility and gentry with their dependants, and, on the other, the Parliament, representing the middle classes of the country, whose religious opinions, whether Presbyterian or Independent, were for the most part anti-Episcopal. In this Civil War the victory fell to the Parliament, with the result that, for a time, the old Monarchical and Ecclesiastical constitution of the country was swept away, the House of Lords abolished, and the Episcopal form of Church government replaced by the Presbyterian. Then came the Restoration of the Stuarts, with its strong monarchical reaction, and the purely constitutional conflict changed into one of a more fundamental character, in which the Monarchs sought to make use of their almost absolute powers to bring back the kingdom under Papal supremacy. The attempt produced a second reaction of which the final product was the Revolution of 1688.

When the time came to reckon up the gains and losses on both sides of the quarrel, it was manifest that, without any overthrow of the external fabric of society, the Catholic and Feudal order of things had been transformed into a more completely civic system of government. No attempt was made to define precisely the extent of the King's prerogative, but the danger of Absolutism was effectually guarded against by the Declaration of Right. Feudalism, in its ancient form, already undermined by Cromwell's destruction of the Castles, had been finally extinguished by the Act for abolishing military tenures. At the same time, while this Act retrenched the power of the Crown, the great landed proprietors all over the country retained their traditional power of guiding and influencing the course of affairs in their own neighbourhood. The Declaration of Right, on one side, provided that the nation should no longer be exposed to peril through the attempts of the Monarch to impose his own religious belief on his subjects; on the other side, the Test Acts

served as a bulwark against the reappearance of the ecclesiastical despotism under which the country had groaned during the supremacy of the Presbyterians. Midway between the two extremes of religious opinion, the doctrines of the Church of England afforded an ample region of spiritual thought, in which the individual might exercise freedom of judgment, and yet keep in touch with the main stream of tradition and authority.

If these political results be considered, much light will be thrown on the resemblances and differences between English and French poetry in the long evolution of the art as practised in each country. Both show a struggle between the same imaginative elements, Scholastic Thought, Chivalrous Sentiment, Civic Tradition, Monarchical Centralisation: both may boast of a capacity for reducing these elemental principles to the just balance of expression. In neither country was there ever, as in Italy, a tendency to reproduce, without assimilation, the external forms of classical art: poetry in France is always French, in England always English. The great difference is that, under the influence of the Renaissance, the centre of the Classical balance tended in France constantly to move towards Authority, in England towards Liberty.

This difference makes itself apparent as the eighteenth century advances. If we take the year 1688 as the starting-point of comparison, we find that about that period all the rules of French poetry have been very precisely prescribed in Boileau's *Art Poétique*, while Dryden is only just laying aside his youthful admiration for Cowley from his growing perception of the "correct" beauty of Virgil.[1] Boileau has founded his style, by right reasoning, on the example of Horace; beyond him, however, there seems to be no road, so that the new generation of French critics fails to appreciate, as he has done, the true meaning of Classical Authority; and Perrault (1628-1703), deprecating reverence for the ancients, maintains that the standard of good writing is to be looked for exclusively in the style of the moderns during the reign of Louis XIV

[1] See vol. iii. pp. 531-532.

With such conditions of taste, the absolute sterility of French poetry in the eighteenth century is not a thing to be wondered at. On English poetry the effect of the Renaissance has up to a certain point been the same as in France. In order to attain the balance of correctness and propriety of expression, aimed at by Dryden in his later years, much of the variety and individuality supplied by the genius of the Middle Ages has been sacrificed: the lyrical impulse has for the time being ceased to agitate the mind of the nation: the ingenious extravagances of Donne, the spiritual conceits of George Herbert, the melodious caprices of Herrick, have been almost forgotten during the riots of the Restoration: *Paradise Lost*, to be endured, must be transfigured into *The State of Innocence.* Nevertheless, in England the element of Romance has only been subdued by the spirit of the Classical Renaissance: it has not been destroyed; and in the course of events, with the natural expansion of society, we shall see the mediæval element in the latter half of the eighteenth century once more exerting an active influence on the progress of English Poetry. Meantime we have to trace the onward movement of the Classical Revival in modifying the conditions of art and taste brought about by the fall of the Feudal Monarchy.

CHAPTER II

THE WHIG VICTORY

WHIG PANEGYRICAL POETRY AFTER THE REVOLUTION OF 1688: THE EARL OF HALIFAX; MATTHEW PRIOR; JOSEPH ADDISON; THOMAS TICKELL; JOHN HUGHES.

"WHIGGISM," said Johnson, "is the negation of all principle."[1] This is one of those party epigrams which are more specious than true; and old Mr. Langton, who was offended by Johnson's humorous hope that his niece was a Jacobite, might have justly retorted on him that Jacobitism was the negation of all *constitutional* principle. Both the constitutional English parties contain within themselves certain tendencies which, in their extreme development, lead, on one side, to Absolutism, on the other, to Anarchy. Yet Whig and Tory statesmen were agreed on the necessity of combining to bring about the Revolution of 1688.

That Revolution was, nevertheless, substantially the victory of a Whig principle, the nature of which may be readily understood by comparing the essence of Locke's *Treatises on Government* with that of *The Leviathan* of Hobbes, which gave a basis of philosophy to the Court party after the Restoration. Both schools begin with the hypothesis of a State of Nature, from which men deliberately choose to depart, and to submit themselves to the order of civil society. But the new state, into which, according to Hobbes (whose ideas we have seen anticipated by Jean de Meung in the *Roman de la Rose*[2]), men volun-

[1] Boswell's *Life of Johnson* (Croker's Edition), p. 148.
[2] Vol. i. pp. 181-182.

tarily bring themselves, is Absolute Monarchy. Locke's theory is no doubt the negation of this doctrine. The Social State, according to him, is a mixed form of government, acting as trustee on behalf of citizens "for the mutual preservation of their lives, liberties, and estates, which," says he, "I call by the general name, property." Locke holds that men could never have voluntarily entered into agreement to submit themselves to one absolute ruler. Such a contract, he says, would be, "as if when men, quitting the state of nature, entered into society, they agreed that all of them should be under the restraint of laws, but that he [the absolute ruler] should still retain all the liberty of the state of nature, increased with power and made licentious with impunity. This is to think men are so foolish that they take care to avoid what mischiefs may be done them by polecats or foxes, but are content, nay, think it safety, to be devoured by lions."[1]

The Whig principle after the Revolution of 1688 was not only embodied in philosophy but, for about half a century, adorned by poetry. Compared with the Tory principle of personal loyalty, it offered few opportunities to those who appeal in verse to the reason and imagination through the emotions; but that it was capable of rousing enthusiasm may be seen by poems published so long after the Revolution as Thomson's *Liberty* and Akenside's *Pleasures of the Imagination*. These works, indeed, are of the didactic order. But in the period immediately following the Revolution, while men's passions were still strongly excited, and the success of the constitutional settlement was in doubt—in other words, during the reigns of William III. and Anne—the kind of poetry most in vogue for exalting the Whig principle was panegyric. The abstract and intellectual character of Whiggism threw many difficulties in the way of poetical panegyrists; but their thoughts were elevated by the importance of the European interests, civil and religious, which were evidently at stake; by the vicissitudes of the war, in which England and France played the leading

[1] *Two Treatises of Government*, book ii. chap vii.

parts; and by the greatness of the chiefs on each side, Louis XIV., William III., and Marlborough. I shall attempt to show presently how influential were these circumstances in moulding the form of Whig panegyrical poetry, as compared with the forms of panegyric employed in the pre-Revolution period; meanwhile I shall present the reader with specimens of the more characteristic compositions of this kind, published while the struggle between Whig and Tory was at its acutest point.

The new character of panegyrical poetry may first be noted in the compositions of Charles Montague, who in time became Baron and then Earl of Halifax. Steele, dedicating to him the fourth volume of *The Tatler*, said: "Your patronage has produced those arts, which before shunned the commerce of the world, into the service of life; and 'tis to you we owe that the man of wit has turned himself to be a man of business." The fourth son of George Montague, a younger son of Henry, first Earl of Manchester, he was born on the 16th April 1661, and was educated at Westminster (where he is said to have distinguished himself by his facility in making extempore epigrams) and afterwards at Trinity College, Cambridge, from which he took his M.A. degree in 1684. In 1685 he joined with other members of the University in celebrating the memory of Charles II., and his verses on this occasion, far from giving any forecast of his future Whiggism, exhibit all the extravagance of the Royalist panegyric. They begin thus:—

Farewell, great Charles! Monarch of blest renown,
The best good man that ever filled a throne,
Whom Nature, as her highest pattern, wrought,
And mixt both sexes' virtue in one draught,
Wisdom for councils, bravery in war,
With all the mild good nature of the Fair.
The woman's sweetness tempered manly wit,
And loving power did crowned with meekness sit.
His awful person reverence engaged,
Which mild address and tenderness assuaged.
Thus the Almighty, gracious King above,
Does both command our fear and win our love.

The conclusion [illegible] tion of the [illegible] "[illegible]" [illegible] paring Charles [illegible] proceeds :—

> [illegible] our hopes [illegible]
> And [illegible] waves [illegible] the [illegible]
> James is as Charles in all things but [illegible]
> Thus Thames is daily lost, but still the [illegible]

But two years later Montague took the [illegible] partnership with Prior, of ridiculing Dryden's [illegible] *Panther* in a parody based partly on *The* [illegible] on Horace's fable of the Town and Country [illegible] the eve of the Revolution, he signed the [illegible] Prince of Orange. It must have been [illegible] he wrote his *Man of Honour*, in which [illegible] of Shrewsbury and Lord Lumley [illegible] to King James. The poem contains [illegible] Virgil's "Excudent alii," etc., which [illegible] suggestion to Addison in his *Epistle from* [illegible] :—

> Let other nations boast [illegible]
> Their fragrant spices, [illegible]
> In breathing colours and [illegible]
> Let them excel : their [illegible]
> But to instruct the mind, and arm the [illegible]
> With virtue, which no dangers can [illegible]
> Exalt the thoughts, a speedy courage lend
> That horror cannot shake, or pleasure bend.
> These are the English arts, these we profess
> To be the same in misery and success.[1]

The following passage from the same poem is of interest because the imagery is suggested by the debasement of the coinage, which Montague himself, when Chancellor of the Exchequer, restored with such admirable skill :—

> Men, like our money, come the most in play
> For being base and of a coarse allay.
> The richest metals and the purest gold,
> Of native value and exactest mould,

[1] Compare the passage from Addison's *Epistle from Italy*, cited on p. 33, and also the lines beginning :—

> Others with towering piles may please the sight, etc.

By worth concealed, in private closets shine,
For vulgar use too precious and too fine;
Whilst tin and copper, with new stamping bright,
Coin of base metal, counterfeit and light,
Do all the business of the nation's turn,
Raised in contempt, used and employed in scorn.

Having brought himself into notice by his literary ability, Montague obtained a seat in the Convention of 1688, which settled the different constitutional questions raised by the flight of James II. He was still, however, in doubt as to his future profession, and continued till 1690—in which year he wrote his *Epistle to Dorset on the Battle of the Boyne*—to trust to his pen for advancement. But being married to the Dowager Countess of Manchester, and having been presented to the King by the Earl of Dorset, he resolved on a political career, and entered the House of Commons, where he at once distinguished himself by his skill in debate. Within three years he had become Chancellor of the Exchequer, and henceforth his work as a poet ceased. He prided himself, however, on being the protector of poets and playwrights. It was to him that Addison owed his advancement, and he was the patron of Congreve, Tickell, and Steele. How much of this patronage was due to vanity, and how much to a grateful sense of what letters had done for him, seems doubtful. Halifax loved dedications and flattery. Swift says of him:—

Thus Congreve spent in writing plays
And one poor office half his days;
While Montague, who claimed the station
To be Mæcenas of the nation,
For poets open table kept,
But ne'er considered where they slept:
Himself as rich as fifty Jews,
Was easy, though they wanted shoes.[1]

And Pope's testimony in his character of Bufo, alluded to by Johnson in his *Life*, is to the same effect. It is, however, to be remembered that Pope's portrait was, in the

[1] *Libel on Dr. Delany.*

first instance, drawn from Dodington, and was only applied to Halifax when an historical sketch of a patron was required for the *Epistle to Arbuthnot*. Halifax died in 1715. Macaulay, in his characteristic manner, says of him :—

His fame has suffered from the folly of those editors who, down to our own time, have persisted in reprinting his rhymes among the works of the British poets. There is not a year in which hundreds of verses, as good as any that he ever wrote, are not sent in for the Newdigate prize at Oxford, and for the Chancellor's medal at Cambridge.[1]

This judgment is certainly nearer the truth than the gross flattery of Addison—not to be excused even on the score of gratitude—who places Montague among the greatest English poets, and suggests that he is superior to Chaucer and Spenser :—

The noble Montague remains unnamed,
For wit, for humour, and for judgment famed.
To Dorset he directs his artful muse,
In numbers such as Dorset's self might use.
How negligently graceful he unreins
His verse, and writes in loose familiar strains!
How Nassau's godlike acts adorn his lines,
And all the hero in full glory shines![2]

But since Macaulay allows that Halifax "succeeded in associating his name inseparably with some names which will last as long as our language," it is desirable that such a representative figure in the history of England should be viewed on every side; and as a poetical panegyrist, Montague is not the worst poet of his age. His "muse" in his *Epistle to Dorset* is perhaps more "artful" than poetical; but there is some ingenuity in his design. He entreats Dorset in "loose familiar strains" (since Dryden's genius is unavailable) to undertake the praises of William: Dorset, however, he knows will decline the task; he therefore resolves to make the attempt *himself*, and inserts in his Epistle a heroic rhapsody, describing William at the

[1] *History of England*, vol. iv. p. 454.
[2] *Account of the Greatest English Poets.*

Battle of the Boyne. After a while, suddenly reverting to the epistolary style, he exclaims :—

Stop! stop, brave Prince!

On which his correspondent is supposed to exclaim :—

"What! does your Muse, sir, faint?
Proceed, pursue his conquests." "Faith! I can't,"

says the poet, and breaking off his fragment, prefers to conclude his Epistle with lines of satiric reflection on the poetical flatterers of Louis XIV., which are certainly vigorous and pointed :—

Oh! if in France this hero had been born,
What glittering tinsel would his acts adorn!
There 'tis immortal fame and high renown
To steal a country and to buy a town.
There triumphs are o'er kings and kingdoms sold,
And captive virtue led in chains of gold.
If courage could, like courts, be kept in pay,
What sums would Louis give that France might say
That victory followed where he led the way?
He all his conquests would for this refund,
And take the equivalent, a glorious wound.
Then what advice, to spread his real fame,
Would pass between Versailles and Nostre Dame!
Their plays, their songs, would dwell upon the wound,
And operas repeat no other sound:
Boyne would for ages be the painter's theme,
The Gobelin's labour, and the poet's dream.
The wounded arm would furnish all their rooms,
And bleed, for ever scarlet, in their looms.
Boileau with this would plume his artful pen—
And can your Muse be silent? Think again.

Matthew Prior's is a name with which Montague's is "inseparably associated." They were schoolfellows; they were members of the same University; they were partners in the first literary venture in which both alike hoped to lay the foundations of a political fortune. Yet their careers and their capacities furnish a singular contrast. Montague was a born orator and statesman; he arrived at eminence with a bound, when once he had passed the threshold of the House of Commons. Prior, on the other

hand, was a born poet; though he filled important political posts, he died a comparatively needy man; and perhaps the very qualities which give him a unique place in English poetry prevented him from winning the highest prizes of English political life.

These prizes were Prior's aim In a complimentary Epistle, asking Fleetwood Sheppard to get him "some little place," he says:—

> There's one thing more I had almost slipt,
> But that may do as well in postscript;
> My friend Charles Montague's preferred,
> Nor would I have it long observed,
> That one mouse eats while t'other's starved.

I reserve a fuller account of Prior's life till I come to that province of poetry to which belongs his genuine fame. Meantime we may note that, while Montague's panegyrical Epistle affects the "loose familiar strains" of which Prior was so much greater a master, Prior labours his praises of "Nassau" in the Pindaric Ode, modelled on the example of Cowley. There is, indeed, little of the vigour and abundance, which elevate the best passages of Cowley, either in Prior's *Imitation of Horace*, Odes, iii 11, or in his *Carmen Seculare*. Cowley seldom copies the mere mythology of Pindar, Prior, who had Horace in all his thoughts, not only compares his hero or his heroine to Jove, Mars, or Juno, but actually addresses Janus as if he were a kind of Whig Historiographer-Royal, and could sympathise with the satisfaction of the British nation in the Revolution of 1688, and with their grief at the loss of Queen Mary.[1]

[1] *Carmen Seculare*, st. viii

> Janus, mighty deity,
> Be kind, and as thy searching eye
> *Does our modern story* trace,
> Finding some of Stuart's race
> Unhappy, pass their annals by,
> No harsh reflection let remembrance raise
> Forbear to mention what thou canst not praise:
> But as thou dwellest upon that heavenly name,

Yet, underneath the artificiality of form in these compositions, so foreign to the native talent of Prior, it is interesting to observe how the spirit of the age instinctively turns contemporary panegyrical verse, in the hands of a man of genius, into channels suitable to the master tendencies of life and thought. If Prior does not reach Cowley's excellencies, he avoids his faults. The structure of his Odes is simple and regular; an intelligible thought is expressed in each stanza, and is worked up to a set climax; there is no straining after far-fetched conceits, and very little trace of the hyperbolical flattery which, in the previous generation, had caused such an offensive disproportion between the subject matter and the form of panegyrical poetry. In all directions lyrical fancy gives place to epigrammatic point; at the same time a certain manliness and public spirit preserve the poet from sinking into mere bombast. The entire *Ode, Presented to the King*, on the death of Queen Mary is devoted to consoling the bereaved husband by reminding him of his duties to the nation, and the closing stanzas may be cited as exemplifying the new style:—

> Yet ought his sorrow to be checkt;
>   Yet ought his passions to abate,
> If the great mourner would reflect
>   Her glory in her death complete.
>
> She was instructed to command,
>   Great King, by long obeying thee;
> Her sceptre, guided by thy hand,
>   Preserved the isles and ruled the sea.
>
> But oh! 'twas little that her life
>   O'er earth and water bears thy fame:
> In death 'twas worthy William's wife
>   Amidst the stars to fix his name.
>
> Beyond where matter moves, or place
>   Receives its forms, thy virtues roll;
> From Mary's glory angels trace
>   The beauty of her partner's soul.
>
> Wise fate, which does its heaven decree
>   To heroes, when they yield their breath,
> Hastens thy triumph. Half of thee
>   Is deified before thy death.

Alone to thy renown 'tis given
  Unbounded through all worlds to go:
While she, great saint, rejoices heaven,
  And thou sustain'st the orb below.

Prior found more truly congenial employment for his own talents in burlesquing the classical hyperboles by which Boileau had attempted to exalt the glory of Louis XIV. after the capture of Namur by the French in 1692. In 1695 William retook the town and fortress, and Prior reprinted Boileau's Ode, with a paraphrase of his own, parallel to each stanza. The art with which he at once ridicules the mythological allusions of the French poet, and converts them into compliments to the English Sovereign, makes this poem a masterpiece of wit, a specimen of which may be given in the stanzas contrasting the physical difficulties overcome by Louis when he took the town in June 1692 with Villeroy's failure to relieve it in August 1695:—

VIII

Mais qui fait enfler la Sambre
Sous les jumeaux effrayés
Des froids torrens de Décembre?
Les champs partout sont noyés.
Cérès s'enfuit, éplorée
De voir en proye à Borée
Ses guérets d'épics chargés,
Et sous les urnes fangeuses
Des Hyades orageuses
Tous les trésors submergés.

VIII

Will no kind flood, no friendly rain
  Disguise the marshal's plain disgrace?
No torrents swell the low Mehayne?
  The world will say he durst not pass.
Why will no Hyades appear,
  Dear poet, on the banks of Sambre;
Just as they did that mighty year
  When you turned June into December?
The water-nymphs are too unkind
  To Villeroy, are the land-nymphs so?
And fly they all at once, combined
To shame a general and a beau?

IX

Déployez toutes vos rages,
Princes, vents, peuples, frimats ;
Ramassez tous vos nuages ;
Rassemblez tous vos soldats.
Malgré vous Namur en poudre
S'en va tomber sous la soudre,
Qui domta Lille, Courtray,
Gand la superbe Espagnole,
Saint Omer, Besançon, Dôle,
Ypres, Mastricht, et Cambray.

IX

Truth, justice, sense, religion, fame,
May join to finish William's story :
Nations set free may bless his name,
And France in secret own his glory.
But Ypres, Mastricht, and Cambray,
Besançon, Ghant, Saint Omer, Lille,
Courtray, and Dole—ye critics, say
How poor to this was Pindar's style !
With ekes and alsos tack thy strain,
Great bard ! and sing the deathless prince,
Who lost Namur the same campaign
He bought Dixmuyd, and plundered Deynse.

X

Mes présages s'accomplissent,
Il commence à chanceler :
Sous les coups qui retentissent
Ses murs s'en vont s'écrouler.
Mars en feu qui les domine
Souffle à grand bruit leur ruine
Et les bombes dans les airs
Allant chercher le tonnerre
Semblent tombant sur la terre
Vouloir s'ouvrir les enfers.

X

I'll hold ten pound my dream is out ;
I'd tell it you but for the rattle
Of those confounded drums ; no doubt
Yon bloody rogues intend a battle.
Dear me ! a hundred thousand French
With terror fill the neighbouring field ;
While William carries on the trench
Till both the town and castle yield.
Villeroy to Boufflers should advance,
Says Mars, through cannons' mouths in fire ;
Id est, one mareschal of France
Tells t'other he can come no nigher.

Of all those who celebrated in verse the advent of the Whig *régime* the one who attained the most genuinely classical manner was undoubtedly Addison. His contemporaries at Oxford ranked him with Edmund, commonly called "Rag" Smith, as the best Latin poet in the University. He valued himself on his skill in the art, and Smith, his rival, declared hyperbolically that his *Pax Gulielmi Auspiciis Europae Reddita* was "the best Latin poem since the *Æneid*." It is indeed a performance of which Vida would not have been ashamed, and in its graceful humour, its mastery of Virgilian diction, and the rhythmical flow of its hexameters, it recalls the *Ludus Scacchia* of that accomplished poet. Addison describes in it the public sense of relief and gladness after the Treaty of Ryswick, the rustic ploughing up the deserted trenches, and wondering at the rich harvests springing out of a soil fertilised with blood; the travellers straying over famous battlefields, and pointing out where Ormond received his wound or Cutts planted the British standard in the midst of a storm of bullets and cannon-balls. With a touch of real poetry, he likens this to mortals creeping forth from their shelter to gaze upon the landscape ruined in the legendary war between the Giants and the Gods, wondering to see how the rivers had changed their courses, and looking in vain for the familiar scenery of mountain and wood. He paints the soldier returning to his native village, and amazing it with tales, wondrous as those told by the Argonauts, "of moving accidents by flood and field." The story of the little Duke of Gloucester playing at soldiers before the King, properly belonging to the year 1695, is utilised for the description of the King landing at Margate; and the bonfires and fireworks of London are exalted in a mock-heroic style, which anticipates the delicate satire in *The Spectator* on the fans or patches of the "fair sex":—

> En procul attonitam video clarescere noctem
> Fulgore insolito! ruit undique lucidus imber,
> Flagrantesque hyemes; crepitantia sidera passim
> Scintillant, totoque pluunt incendia caelo.

Nec minus id terris Vulcanus mille figuras
Induit, ignivomasque feras, et fulgida monstra,
Terribiles visu formas! hic membra Leonis
Hispida mentitur, tortisque comantia flammis
Colla quatit, rutilasque jubas: hic lubricus Anguem
Ludit, subsiliens, et multo sibilat igne.

In a Latin address to Montague prefixed to this composition, Addison alludes to the English poems written in honour of the Peace, which, he says, are so bad as almost to make the reader regret the occasion that called them forth; and he pretends, with much dexterity, that he shrinks from offering his patron anything written in vernacular verse, because the latter is such a master in this art as to drive all rivals out of the field. Four years later, while still professing his awe for Montague's poetical genius, he overcame his own politic bashfulness. The Chancellor of the Exchequer (soon afterwards created Lord Halifax) had obtained for him in 1699 a pension of £300 from the King to enable him to travel on the Continent; and to Halifax in 1701 Addison accordingly addressed his admirable *Letter from Italy.* In this poem almost every verse shows the refining influence which study of the classics had exercised on his taste and judgment. Genuine feeling inspires the lines in which he imparts to his correspondent his enthusiasm amid regions that everywhere awaken memory and imagination:—

For wheresoe'er I turn my ravished eyes,
Gay gilded scenes and shining prospects rise.
Poetic fields encompass me around,
And still I seem to tread on classic ground.
For here the muse so oft her harp has strung,
That not a mountain rears its head unsung:
Renowned in verse each shady thicket grows,
And every stream in heavenly numbers flows.

It is poetry, he says, that enables the Tiber to scorn the Danube and the Nile, physically so superior to it; and in this thought he finds an opportunity for one of those complimentary turns which he could always use with exquisite skill:—

So high the deathless muse exalts her theme;
Such was the Boyne, a poor inglorious stream,
That in Hibernian vales obscurely strayed,
And unobserved in wild mæanders played,
Till by your lines and Nassau's sword renowned,
Its rising billows through the world resound,
Where'er the hero's god-like acts can pierce,
Or where the fame of an immortal verse.
O, could the muse my ravished breast inspire
With warmth like yours, and raise an equal fire,
Unnumbered beauties in my verse should shine,
And Virgil's Italy should yield to mine!

The gratitude felt by Addison to Montague may excuse the partiality of this criticism, particularly in view of the excellence of the flattery. But in his admiration for Italian art, on the one hand, and for English liberty, on the other, there is no fiction; and into the following very fine passage the spirit of the English Whig breathes a noble animation:—

How has kind heaven adorned the happy land,
And scattered blessings with a wakeful hand!
But what avail her unexhausted stores,
Her blooming mountains and her sunny shores,
With all the gifts that heaven and earth impart,
The smiles of nature, and the charms of art,
While proud oppression in her valley reigns,
And tyranny usurps her happy plains?
The poor inhabitant beholds in vain
The reddening orange and the swelling grain:
Joyless he sees the growing oils and wines,
And in the myrtle's fragrant shade repines,
Starves, in the midst of nature's bounty curst,
And in the loaden vineyard dies of thirst.
Oh Liberty, thou goddess heavenly bright,
Profuse of bliss, and pregnant with delight!
Eternal pleasures in thy presence reign,
And smiling plenty leads thy wanton train;
Eased of her load subjection grows more light,
And poverty looks cheerful in thy sight.
Thou mak'st the gloomy face of nature gay,
Giv'st beauty to the sun, and pleasure to the day.
Thee, goddess, thee Britannia's isle adores,
How has she oft exhausted all her stores,
How oft in fields of death thy presence sought,
Nor thinks the mighty prize too dearly bought.

On foreign mountains may the sun refine
The grape's soft juice, and mellow it to wine,
With citron groves adorn a distant soil,
And the fat olive swell with floods of oil:
We envy not the warmer clime that lies
In ten degrees of more indulgent skies,
Nor at the coarseness of our heaven repine,
Though o'er our heads the frozen planets shine.
'Tis Liberty that crowns Britannia's isle,
And makes her barren rocks and her bleak mountains smile.

As the battle of Blenheim was the culminating point in what may be fairly called the foreign policy of the Whigs, so is *The Campaign* (1704) the greatest achievement of Whig panegyrical poetry. This poem, viewed as a composition, is justly ranked below the *Letter from Italy*, but in estimating its merits it is fair to take into account the difficulties with which Addison had to contend. *The Campaign* was written to Godolphin's order: if it had not been in the first place a political panegyric it would have failed of its purpose. Joseph Warton styled it a "Gazette in rhyme," and then, being called t account for his phrase by Johnson, tried to attenuate hi meaning.[1] Yet Addison himself justifies Warton's criticis in his concluding lines:—

Thus would I fain Britannia's wars rehearse
In the smooth records of a faithful verse,
That, if such numbers can o'er time prevail,
May tell posterity the wondrous tale.
When actions unadorned are faint and weak,
Cities and countries must be taught to speak;
Gods may descend in factions from the skies,
And rivers from their oozy beds arise;
Fiction may deck the truth with spurious rays,
And round the hero cast a borrowed blaze;
Marlborough's exploits appear divinely bright,
And proudly shine in their own borrowed light;
Raised of themselves, their genuine charms they boast,
And those who paint them truest praise them most.

Since "praise" was the order of the day, it follov that a "chronicle," as Steele justly calls the poem,[2] execu with as much decorative colour and ingenuity as the fa

[1] *Essay on Pope.* See also his edition of *Pope's Works* (1797), iv. 18

[2] *Tatler*, No. 43.

themselves allowed, was the form of art called for by the occasion. Marlborough's march across Flanders and Germany to the Danube did not admit of any great variety of description, nor was it easy to distinguish the character of one battle from that of another. Still, these difficulties were met by the poet with great dexterity, and *his narrative of events is so agreeably relieved by addresses to places and persons, as well as by simile and allusion,* that a high level of flight is maintained throughout the poem. The fine apostrophe to Marshal Tallard may be taken as a good specimen of really "classical" English verse:—

> Unfortunate Tallard! O, who can name
> The pangs of rage, and sorrow, and of shame,
> That with mixed tumult in thy bosom swelled,
> When first thou saw'st thy bravest troops repelled,
> Thine only son pierced with a deadly wound,
> Choked in his blood, and gasping on the ground,
> Thyself in bondage by the victor kept!
> The chief, the father, and the captive wept.
> An English muse is touched with generous woe,
> And in the unhappy man forgets the foe!
> Greatly distrest! thy loud complaints forbear;
> Blame not the turns of fate and chance of war;
> Give thy brave foes their due, nor blush to own
> The fatal field by such brave leaders won,
> The field, whence famed Eugenio bore away
> *Only the second honours of the day.*

Addison communicated his gift of manly plainness in panegyrical expression to some of his Whig disciples among the minor poets, and especially to Thomas Tickell (1686-1740), whose eulogy of *Rosamund*, *Verses on the Prospect of Peace* and, above all, *Elegy on Addison* justly maintain his reputation as a poet. The first-named performance has perhaps not that uniform excellence which Johnson's praises seem to imply, who says that "among the innumerable poems of the same kind, it will be hard to find one with which it needs to fear a comparison."[1] But its opening lines, at least, are admirable in their unadorned simplicity:—

[1] *Lives of the Poets. Tickell.*

The Opera first Italian masters taught,
Enriched with songs, but innocent of thought;
Britannia's learned theatre disdains
Melodious trifles and enervate strains,
And blushes on her injured stage to see
Nonsense well tuned and sweet stupidity.

No charms are wanting to thy artful song,
Soft as Corelli, and as Virgil strong.
From words so sweet new grace the notes receive,
And music borrows help she used to give.
Thy style hath matched what ancient Romans knew,
Thy flowing numbers far excel the new.
Their cadence in such easy sound conveyed,
The height of thought may seem superfluous aid;
Yet in such charms the noble thoughts abound,
That needless seem the sweets of easy sound.

The Prospect of Peace is praised by Addison for its observation of his own precepts. "I was particularly well pleased," he says, "to find that the author had not amused himself with fables out of the pagan theology, and that when he hints at anything of this nature he alludes to it only as to a fable."[1] The following lines are quite in the spirit of *The Campaign*:—

Blest use of power! O virtuous pride in kings!
And like His bounty whence dominion springs!
Which o'er new worlds makes Heaven's indulgence shine,
And ranges myriads under laws divine!
Well bought with all that those sweet regions hold,
With groves of spices and with mines of gold.

Fearless our merchant now pursues his gain,
And roams securely o'er the boundless main;
Now o'er his head the polar Bear he spies,
And freezing spangles of the Lapland skies;
Now swells his canvas to the sultry line,
With glittering spoils where Indian grottoes shine;
Where fumes of incense glad the southern seas,
And wafted citron scents the balmy breeze.
Here nearer suns prepare the ripened gem
To grace great Anne's imperial diadem.
And here the ore, whose melted mass shall yield
On faithful coins each memorable field;
Which, mixed with medals of immortal Rome,
May clear disputes and teach the times to come.

[1] *Spectator*, No. 523.

But the panegyrists of Addison's school did not always reach this level of excellence. In what is on the whole a fair criticism of Addison's poetry, Johnson makes one remark which, though hardly just to the author of *The Campaign* in his best work, is certainly applicable to the style of some of his disciples. "Addison," he says, "thinks justly, but he thinks faintly. *This is his general character.*" Now the apostrophe to Marshal Tallard, which, as I have said, may be taken as typical of Addison's style, cannot justly be said to show "faint thinking." It is strong, individual, characteristic. But when the Whig panegyric is employed by poets whose art is the fruit only of cultivation, it is liable to sink into a merely "negative" style. The most instructive example of "faintness" is to be found in the panegyrical poetry of John Hughes (1677-1720), who wrote much verse in praise of William III. in the last decade of the seventeenth century.

Taking as a type of Hughes' style his poem on the Treaty of Ryswick, we find him telling his readers how the heaven-born Muse once bore his raptured soul through untraced realms of light when, looking down on the clouds beneath him, these suddenly parted, and he saw the map of Europe, which he describes with some minuteness. A hero appeared, leading by the hand a blooming virgin. The hero, equal to Mars and Jove combined, was, of course, William III., but (Mary being dead) the reader naturally speculates as to the person of his companion. She turns out to be the abstract Goddess, Peace. The pair embark on a vessel and seek the British Isles, accompanied by a considerable number of the ancient gods, whom the poet calls on the Muse to enumerate:—

> Proceed, my Muse! the [illegible] re;
> Say [illegible]
> Firs[illegible]
> By [illegible]
> A cornucopia filled her weaker hand,
> Charged with the various offspring of the land,
> Fruit, flowers, and corn; her right a sickle bore;
> A yellow wreath of twisted wheat she wore.

Next, Father Bacchus, with his tigers, graced
The show, and squeezing clusters as he passed,
Quaffed flowing goblets of rich-flavoured wine:
In order last succeed the tuneful Nine;
Apollo too was there, etc.

Apollo exhorts "great William" to lead on, and sings the blessings of peace. Hardly is his song finished when the vessel arrives at land, and the King, with an attendant crowd of his subjects, proceeds to a thanksgiving in St. Paul's, leaving, we may suppose, the Olympian deities at the seaside. The poem ends with an allusion to the newly finished choir of the Cathedral, and the verses in which this is described are the only ones in the whole composition which contain a touch of reality or individual character.

No more suggestive comment could be found on Addison's lines:—

When actions unadorned are faint and weak,
Cities and countries must be taught to speak;
Gods may descend in factions from the skies,
And rivers from their oozy beds arise.

Addison seems to suggest that, under such circumstances, Hughes' mythological method is pardonable; but he forgets what Horace says:—

Mediocribus esse poetis
Non homines, non di, non concessere columnae.

Hughes evidently writes, not because he is inspired by his theme, but because the occasion requires him to pay compliments in verse. He "thinks faintly," and the faintness of his thoughts arises partly out of his own want of genius, partly out of the lack of vitality in his subject matter, but partly, also, out of the metrical form which he chooses for the expression of his ideas. His lack of inspiration is patent in his verse. In the mouths of men like Somers and Montague, Addison and Locke, who took a leading part in the Revolution movement, the praises of Liberty, or of William as the Champion of Liberty, were sincere, and the expression of them unaffected. Used, however, as the dialect of a party, Whig phraseology

often hardened into cant; while the middle position, held by the faction between Absolutism and Republicanism, tended to encourage mediocrity. The mere versifier strove to cover the vacuity of his thought by the pomposity of his phrase, and this aim is sufficient in itself to account for the adoption by the Whig panegyrists of the heroic couplet, in place of the Pindaric ode favoured by the flattering poets of the Restoration era.

The transition was not quite abrupt. Prior, as we have seen, employed the so-called Pindaric style for panegyrical purposes, but his odes are apt to resolve themselves into sequences of couplets. Thus, in his *Carmen Seculare*, stanza ix. runs as follows:—

> His opening years to riper manhood bring,
> And see the hero perfect in the king;
> Imperious arms by manly reason swayed,
> And power supreme by free consent obeyed.
> With how much haste his mercy meets his foes,
> And how unbounded his forgiveness flows;
> With what desire he makes his subjects blessed;
> His favours granted ere his throne addressed:
> What trophies o'er our captive hearts he rears
> By arts of peace more potent than by wars:
> How o'er himself, as o'er the world, he reigns,
> His morals strengthening what his law ordains.

Here the absence alike of lyrical impulse and of metaphorical imagery is noticeable, and the essentially epigrammatic tendency of the heroic couplet displays itself. Prior cannot be strictly said to "think faintly"; but his thought has no distinction. He is the poetical son of Waller, not of Cowley.

Waller was by taste and temperament a Whig in embryo Well-born and wealthy, a scholar familiar with classical and modern literature, without any strong impulse of political enthusiasm, he mixed from his earliest years in political society, and seasoned himself to every constitutional change. In the Long Parliament he spoke in opposition both to Laud and Pym. He conspired on behalf of Charles I.; he exalted the virtues of Cromwell as a ruler; his powers of flattery were afterwards turned

with equal versatility to the praise of Charles II. and the Duke of York. For all these changes of political sentiment he found a melodious instrument in the heroic couplet; and Addison, who places him high in the very small band accounted worthy to be called English poets, wishes that he had lived to turn his poetical coat once more in celebration of William:—

Thy verse, harmonious bard, and flattering song,
Can make the vanquished great, the coward strong.
Thy verse can show ev'n Cromwell's innocence,
And compliment the storm that bore him hence.
Oh, had thy muse not come an age too soon,
But viewed great Nassau on the British throne!
How had his triumph glittered in thy page,
And warmed thee to a more exalted rage![1]

Waller on occasions could rise to a vigorous flight, but "smoothness" was his characteristic quality; and this fatal gift was by his second-rate imitators made the aim of the heroic couplet. They followed his footsteps in another direction equally unfortunate. In speaking of Waller's poetry I showed his natural inclination to eke out the frequent triviality of his thought by commonplace classical allusions and images.[2] His feebler successors, like Hughes, attempted to replace metaphysical "conceit" by florid mythological impersonation: the Pantheon is emptied into their poems. Addison himself rejected the temptation to praise William after this fashion in English verse. In his Latin verse, indeed, there is no lack of such imagery. But in *The Campaign* the only supernatural image is the simile of the Angel; and of this Johnson, the chief critic of the classical school, very characteristically questions the value. He says:—

Marlborough is so like the angel in the poem, that the action of both is almost the same, and performed by both in the same manner. Marlborough "teaches the battle to rage"; the angel "directs the storm"; Marlborough is "unmoved in peaceful thought"; the angel is "calm and serene"; Marlborough stands

[1] *Short Account of the Greatest English Poets.*
[2] Vol. iii. pp. 275-277.

"unmoved amidst the shock of hosts"; the angel rides "calm in the whirlwind." The lines on Marlborough are just and noble; but the simile gives almost the same images a second time But perhaps the thought, though hardly a simile, was remote from vulgar conceptions, and required great labour of research or dexterity of application. Of this Dr. Madden, a name which Ireland ought to honour, once gave me his opinion. "If I had set," said he, "ten schoolboys to write on the battle of Blenheim, and eight had brought me the Angel, I should not have been surprised."[1]

Had the simile of the angel been so entirely abstract and general as Johnson declares, his criticism would have been just; but he overlooks the fact that the application is individual and particular.—

So when an angel, by divine command,
With rising tempests shakes a guilty land,
Such as of late o'er pale Britannia past.

Dr. Madden's eight poetical schoolboys, like Lord Macaulay's universal one, are the creatures rather of epigrammatic fancy than of fact.

Yet even Addison, though he can seldom be justly charged with thinking faintly, did not altogether escape the danger of smooth triviality, to which Waller's classicalism had exposed all his followers. The heroic couplet in his hands reaches a point between the native vigour of Dryden and the polished terseness of Pope Trusting too confidently to the excellence of his thought, he is content to convey this to the reader in a general way, and his individual lines not seldom leave an impression of feebleness. To take examples from the poems I have mentioned, he sometimes duplicates the thought in a couplet, as

O could the Muse my ravished breast inspire
With *warmth* like yours, and raise an equal *fire!*

He imitates the Latin poets much more closely than Dryden had done, by joining adjectives to substantives But his adjectives sometimes lack significance; they are general, not particular, nor is there always "correctness"

[1] *Lives of the Poets: Addison.*

in his metaphors. *The Campaign* is full of conventional imagery like the following:—

> To vengeance roused the soldier fills his hand
> With sword and fire, and ravages the land,
> A thousand villages to ashes turns,
> In crackling flames a thousand harvests burns;
> To the thick woods the woolly flocks retreat,
> And, mixt with bellowing herds, confusedly bleat.

Or,

> *Mountains* of slain *lie* heaped upon the ground,
> Or midst the roarings of the Danube *drowned;*
> Whole captive hosts the conqueror detains
> In painful bondage and inglorious chains.

Or,

> But, O my Muse what numbers wilt thou find
> To sing the furious troops in battle joined?
> Methinks I hear the drum's tumultuous sound
> The victors' shouts and dying groans confound;
> The dreadful burst of cannon rend the skies,
> And all the *thunder* of the battle *rise.*

Generalised descriptions such as the above and otiose epithets, such as "gay gilded scenes," "the gay victorious army," leave us with the frequent impression that Addison has been translating loosely from some Latin poet of the post-Augustan age. His narrative style in *The Campaign* may indeed be said to be the exact opposite of that of Lucan in the *Pharsalia.* Lucan, whom he would doubtless have condemned on principle as an incorrect poet, strives to show his cleverness by the unexpected form he gives to every sentence; Addison, when he has once settled on the proper turn of thought in each paragraph, is not sufficiently particular in the choice of words required to produce the general rhythmical effect.

Such peculiarities of expression discover the tendencies of classical Whiggism in its transition from the extravagant Toryism of the antecedent era. They reflect the change from the feudal Absolutism of the Stuarts to the Parliamentary system of the eighteenth century. The poetry of the earlier period, in one sense or another, generally involved the flattery of persons; the poetry

that followed concerned itself more and more with the exposition of principles. Judged by the true balance of art the one school errs mainly by excess, the other by defect. Donne and Cowley seldom think faintly; they often think violently: their successors, while avoiding their extravagance, are apt to sink into mediocrity: the former in their metaphysical lyrics individualise their imagery so highly that they get out of sight of reason and common-sense: the latter generalise their expression in the heroic couplet, and thereby disguise the essential insipidity of their thought. The onward movement of the national imagination is continued by those poets of genius who have force enough to express the individuality of their own character within the classical limitations which the taste of their age requires.

CHAPTER III

WHIG AND TORY

HEROIC, MOCK-HEROIC, AND DIDACTIC VERSE AFTER THE REVOLUTION: SIR RICHARD BLACKMORE; SIR SAMUEL GARTH; JOHN PHILIPS.

THE negative political character of the Whig victory is further reflected in the turn of poetical invention during the years immediately following the fall of James II. A certain wild vigour marks the poetry of action in the whole period of the Restoration of the Stuarts. The feverish extravagances of the heroic play; the unrestrained license of Caroline comedy; the virulent exchange of personal abuse between Whig and Tory satirists, are all marks of an age when public imagination was concentrated on the amusements and interests of a semi-absolute Court. When those amusements and interests disappeared, the poets of the day were deprived of a powerful external stimulus to invention. There was nothing in the Court of William and Mary or of Anne to supply the place of the joyous dissipation of Charles II. The social fashions of those monarchs were decorous, but they were also dull.

On the other hand, some compensation was made for the failure of Court patronage by the increased interest of the public in literature. By the termination of the civil conflict, the people were able to extend their imagination to spheres of taste lying beyond the range of politics. During the reign of William III., Dryden was chiefly engaged on his translation of Virgil, his intended trans-

lation of Homer, and those other experiments of general literary interest which are preserved in the volume containing his *Fables*. All his writing at this period indicates his consciousness of the growth of a fresh audience, making new kinds of demand upon the imagination; and the taste to which he ministered with supreme genius guided, though it scarcely stimulated, the humbler efforts of his contemporaries. The poetry of the time, if far from lively, is of some interest, on account of the new tendencies it reveals. Even Blackmore's grotesque attempts at epic poetry show signs of originality, and his didactic verse is often marked by an excellence that forecasts the coming of Pope's ethical style. Garth's *Dispensary* is the prelude to *The Rape of the Lock*; John Philips, in his *Splendid Shilling* and *Cider*, strikes a new vein of metrical composition, which is destined to be largely developed in the course of the eighteenth century. The work of all three poets deserves attention, not so much in itself as in its illustration of the temper of the age included between the Revolution of 1688 and the Treaty of Utrecht.

Richard Blackmore was the son of Robert Blackmore of Corsham in Wiltshire (supposed to have been an attorney), and was born some time after 1650. He was sent to Westminster when thirteen years of age, and passed thence in 1668 to St. Edmund's Hall, Oxford, where he took his M.A. degree on the 3rd of June 1676. After residing at Oxford in all for thirteen years, he travelled in Italy, and in Padua was made Doctor of Medicine. In 1687 he became Fellow of the College of Physicians. He seems to have obtained in his profession a high reputation and a considerable practice, which probably lay mainly among the merchants of the City, where he had a house in Cheapside. It does not appear how, in the midst of so much business, he first came to turn his thoughts to poetry. "I had read but little poetry throughout my whole life," he says in the preface to *King Arthur*, "and in fifteen years before I had not, as I can remember, wrote a hundred lines in verse, excepting a copy of Latin verse

in honour of a friend's book." In his preface to *Prince Arthur*, he says he was mainly inspired by a wish to produce some form of entertainment which should occupy the imagination of the young more innocently than did the vicious comedies of the age. "I have also," said he, in his preface to *King Arthur*, "another reason . . . and that is, that I am so far fallen out with all hypotheses in Philosophy, and all doctrines of Physic, that I am almost reduced to a sceptical despair." If he had learned from his profession that life was short, he did not seem to recognise that art was long; for in the same preface he informs us that *Prince Arthur* was "begun, carried on, and completed in less than two years' time, and by such catches and starts, and in such occasional uncertain hours as the business of my profession would afford me. And, therefore, for the greatest part, that poem was written in coffee-houses, and in passing up and down the streets, because I had little leisure elsewhere to apply to it."

This poem—which contained ten books—was extremely popular. It passed through three editions in two years, and won the admiration of the unpoetical John Locke. Stimulated by his success, Blackmore continued the adventures of his hero in *King Arthur*, an epic of twelve books, celebrating Arthur's conquest of France and the capture of Lutetia. Johnson says: "The malignity of the wits attributed his knighthood to his new poem; but King William was not very studious of poetry." Blackmore was certainly knighted and made physician-in-ordinary to the King in 1697; and I think it is more than probable that these honours were the reward of *King Arthur*, an epic poem, intended to allegorise the exploits of King William in his war against France. In it Louis XIV. is satirised under the name of King Clotar, a monstrous tyrant, who persecutes the Christians (*i.e.* the Huguenots), and makes his meals on the raw limbs of his subjects; while the Assassination Plot of 1696 forms an episode in the action, and flattering portraits, under fictitious names, are drawn of the Whig Ministers, Somers and Halifax.

Pursuing the moral and religious path he had marked out for himself, Blackmore in 1700 produced a *Paraphrase of the Book of Job* and a *Satire against Wit*, in the latter of which he severely attacked Dryden, whose offences against morality on the stage he had previously assailed in the preface to *Prince Arthur*. Dryden replied by a contemptuous allusion to Blackmore in the prologue to *The Pilgrim*, acted shortly before his own death. In 1705 appeared *Eliza*, an epic in ten books, of which Johnson says: "I am afraid that the world was now weary of contending about Blackmore's heroes; for I do not remember that by any author, serious or comical, I have found *Eliza* either praised or blamed. She 'dropped,' as it seems, 'dead-born from the press.'"

The exploits of Marlborough in 1706 naturally aroused Blackmore's enthusiasm; but he confined himself to advising others how to celebrate them adequately in verse and other kinds of art. One of his nostrums, *Instructions to Vanderbank* (1709), a weaver of tapestry, provoked the merriment of Steele in *The Tatler*.[1] *Creation*, his best poem, appeared in 1712, and was extravagantly praised in *The Spectator*.[2] When that paper and *The Guardian* came to an end, Blackmore, thinking that the public ought not to be left without instruction, edified them in a periodical called *The Lay Monk*, which he carried on with the help of Hughes through forty numbers, from 16th November 1713 to 15th February 1714. In 1716-17 he published some volumes of Essays, in which he attacked Swift, as the writer of *A Tale of a Tub*, and Pope, as "a godless author who has burlesqued a Psalm": it must be added, however, that in neither case was Blackmore the first aggressor. His effusion of verse was not even yet exhausted, for in 1721 he produced a *Version of the Psalms of David fitted to the Tunes used in Churches*; in 1722, a religious poem called *Redemption*; and, in 1723, yet another Epic entitled *Alfred*.

He had now arrived at an age when practice often deserts even attentive physicians, and when it is natural

[1] *Tatler*, No. 3. [2] *Spectator*, No. 339.

that it should desert one whose attention was so much given as Blackmore's to other things. His patients left him as well as his readers: in his latter years, therefore, he turned to the theory of medicine, and, to adopt Johnson's humorous phrase, occupied himself with "teaching others to cure those whom he himself could cure no longer." He also wrote a book on *Natural Theology*, which was his last work before his death on the 8th of October 1729.

Johnson, in his *Life*, says of him most justly that, as a poet, Blackmore has received "worse treatment than he deserves." For his epic poetry indeed there is little to be said. He has not the faintest perception of the meaning of the word "sublime"; and his studied imitation of splendid passages in Virgil, Tasso, and Milton, uniformly leaves a sense of the ridiculous. No poet, with any humour in his genius, could possibly have produced such lines as the following:—

> Ætna, Vesuvius, and the fiery kind,
> Their flames within blown up with stormy wind,
> With din, concussions, and loud war complain
> Of deadly gripes, and fierce consuming pain.
> The labouring mounts belch drossy vomit out,
> And throw their melted bowels round about.

It may well be supposed from this example that the author of the *Treatise on the Bathos* found a happy hunting-ground in Blackmore's epics. I am bound to add, besides, that Blackmore, in his acknowledgment of obligations, is not quite honest. He confesses his debt to Virgil, for that was too obvious to be denied. He modelled his epic closely after the Latin poet, endeavouring to adapt the entire scheme of narrative in the *Æneid* to a Christian plot. Having shown how Prince Arthur was wrecked on the coast of Brittany by a storm, which Lucifer and Thor[1] contrive, precisely after the example of Juno and Æolus in the first book of the *Æneid*, he brings

[1] *Prince Arthur* would be interesting, if for no other reason, as the first English poem in which use is made of Scandinavian mythology for the purpose of epic "machinery."

his hero to the court of the heathen King Hoel, who takes the hospitable part of Dido; and he occupies two books in making Arthur describe to that monarch, after the latter has been miraculously converted, the Creation of the world and the Day of Judgment. In the fourth book—Arthur having retired to bed—Hoel, who, as a listener, must have been unrivalled, hears from Lucius, the "fidus Achates" of the poem, the adventures of the Prince after the arrival of the Saxons in Britain; while, in the fifth, Arthur has a dream, suggested by the sixth book of the *Æneid*, in which his father, Uther, reveals to him the long succession of British Kings, leading up, of course, to a panegyric on the "brave Nassovian," and an allusion to the death of Queen Mary, imitated from Virgil's passage about the young Marcellus.

But, except with regard to Virgil, Blackmore piques himself on his originality. "As I had not my eye," he says in his preface to *King Arthur*, "on any other model, so I am not conscious to myself of having used any author's thoughts or expressions." But though he never mentions the *Gerusalemme Liberata* or *Paradise Lost*, his *King Arthur* shows that he had read them both, and had directly copied from the former the episode of Armida and Rinaldo, and from the latter the debate in Pandemonium. Nevertheless, in the lower or didactic orders of poetry, when he is moving in a medium where he can observe and reason, his style is often lucid and forcible. His complimentary portraits of the Whig ministry under feigned names in *King Arthur* have much life: witness the following lines on Somers, written at a time when the character of that statesman stood out in brilliant contrast with the treachery of Marlborough and Godolphin:

> He with his wit could, when he pleased, surprise,
> But he suppressed it, choosing to be wise.
> None better knew the business of the State,
> Clear as the day, and as the night sedate,
> Favourite and patriot, he the secret knew
> How both to prince and people to be true·
> He made their interest one, and showed the way
> To serve the first, and not the last betray.

Creation, if it lacks the epigrammatic point and brilliancy of the *Essay on Man*, has more philosophic consistency. The argument against the Epicureans is conducted from first to last with great lucidity, and the ease and sprightliness of the versification entitles the poem to rank, in that order of poetry which is "fittest for discourse and nearest prose," on the same level with *Nosce Teipsum* and *Religio Laici*. The following passages will justify what is here said:—

Regard the orbs sublime, in ether borne,
Which the blue regions of the skies adorn;
Compared with whose extent this low-hung ball,
Shrunk to a point, is despicably small:
Their number, counting those the unaided eye
Can see, or by inverted tubes descry,
With those which in the adverse hemisphere,
Or near each pole, in lands remote appear,
The widest stretch of human thought exceeds,
And in the attentive mind amazement breeds.
While these so numerous, and so vast of size,
In various way roll through the trackless skies,
Through crossing roads, perplexed and intricate,
Perform their stages, and their rounds repeat,
None by collision from their course are driven;
No shocks nor conflicts break the peace of heaven.
No shattered globes, no glowing fragments fall;
No worlds o'erturned crush this terrestrial ball.
In beauteous order all the orbs advance,
And in their mazy complicated dance,
Not in one part of all the pathless sky
Did ever any halt or step awry.

When twice ten thousand men, deprived of sight,
To some wide vale direct their footsteps right,
Shall there a various figured dance essay,
Move by just steps, and measured time obey,
Shall cross each other with unerring feet,
Never mistake their place, and never meet;
Nor shall in many years the least decline
From the same ground and the same winding line:
Then may in various roads the orbs above,
Without a guide, in perfect concord move,
Then beauty, order, and harmonious laws,
May not require a wise Directing Cause.[1]

[1] *Creation*, book ii.

The vigour of thought, diction, and numbers in the following semi-Cartesian reasoning is unmistakable:—

I think, I move, I therefore know I am;
While I have been, I still have been the same,
Since from an infant I a man became.
But though I am, few circling years have gone,
Since I in Nature's roll was quite unknown.
Then since 'tis plain I have not always been,
I ask from whence my being could begin:
I did not to myself existence give,
Nor from myself the secret power receive,
By which I reason, and by which I live.
I did not build this frame, nor do I know
The hidden springs from whence my motions flow.

. . . . . .

If to myself I did not being give,
Nor from immediate parents did receive,
It could not from my predecessors flow;
They than my parents could not more bestow.
Should we the long depending scale ascend
Of sons and fathers, will it never end?
If 'twill, then must we through the order run,
To some one man whose being ne'er begun:
If that one man was sempiternal, why
Did he, since independent, ever die?
If from himself his own existence came,
The cause, that could destroy his being, name.[1]

Beyond this tendency to use verse as an instrument for dialectic, another symptom of the advance of the philosophic spirit in English society, and of the more subtle refinement of taste, is afforded by the rapidly increasing popularity of mock-heroic, as a distinct species of poetical composition. This, like almost all other fields of modern poetry, was first cultivated by the Italians. Its ironic genius was congenital with the sweetness of their language, and both Berni and Ariosto proved the capacity of the romantic manner for the purpose of burlesque. But the first to produce a parody of the romantic Italian epic on regular and extended lines was Alessandro Tassoni, in *La Secchia Rapita*. Boileau, taking the hint from Tassoni, acclimatised the mock-heroic in French poetry

[1] *Creation*, book vi.

in a strictly classical form; and from his *Lutrin* Dryden derived the idea, which he embodied in *Mac-Flecknoe*, of using the mock-heroic as a vehicle for satire. So exclusively personal were the grounds of Dryden's quarrel with Shadwell that he had to provide almost the entire framework of his poem out of his own invention; and *Mac-Flecknoe* is justly liable to the reproach of celebrating a hero without an action. The honour of the first attempt to apply the mock-heroic form to an English subject ought perhaps therefore to be ascribed to another poet.

Samuel Garth, the eldest son of William Garth of Bowland Forest, in the West Riding of Yorkshire, was born in 1661. He was sent to school at Ingleton in his native county; and in 1676 was admitted to Peterhouse, Cambridge, whence he graduated as B.A. in 1679, and as M.A. in 1684. He studied medicine at Leyden, became M.D. on the 7th of July 1691, and was elected Fellow of the College of Physicians in 1693. In 1694 he was appointed Gulstonian Lecturer, and in 1697 was chosen to deliver the Harveian Oration, which he dedicated to Montague. He took an active part in the conflict between the Physicians and the Apothecaries, being one of the forty members of the College who undertook to distribute medicines gratis to the poor, and he finally became the "sacer vates" of the war, which he celebrated in his *Dispensary*, published in 1699. The College of Physicians appointed him one of its censors in 1702.

Garth early attached himself to the Whig Party, and constantly endeavoured to promote its fortunes. He was a member of the Kit-Kat Club, and author of several of the toasts inscribed on the glasses of that society. When Godolphin was deprived of his office in 1710, Garth addressed some verses to him comparing his disappearance from the world of politics to the splendour of the setting sun. His fidelity to the Whig cause was rewarded at the accession of the House of Hanover in 1714, when he was made Physician in Ordinary to the King, and Physician General to the Army, and was knighted with Marlborough's sword. In 1717 he undertook a co-

operative [illegible]
which proved [illegible]
in one of his [illegible]
Claremont, a local [illegible]
and *Windsor* [illegible]
He died on the [illegible]
beside his wife at [illegible]

Johnson in his [illegible]
between the Physicians and the [illegible]
decree of the former, in [illegible]
tribution of drugs, and [illegible]
in instincts of pure benevolence. [illegible]
that the decree was the first [illegible]
between the faculties; but [illegible]
strife had been given years before [illegible]
early history of the subject [illegible]
mainly out of a collision of [illegible]
Middle Ages, when, as may be [illegible]
Juliet,[1] the practice of [illegible]
by the knowledge and [illegible]
occupied perhaps a more [illegible]
estimation than any other [illegible]
were one of the [illegible]
London, where they had their College [illegible]
quite apart from the College of [illegible]
of labour was sharp and [illegible]
prescribed the [illegible]
but the drugs [illegible]
as a rule, alone [illegible]
One of the [illegible]
in the civil war [illegible]
with regard to [illegible]
whole on the side of the [illegible]
story of the profession:—

> A celebrated physician, [illegible]
> side, spied a great piece of a [illegible]
> drug, took it in his hand, and inquired [illegible]

[1] *Romeo and Juliet*, Act v. Sc. 1.

the druggist said, "Do you not know it, Mr. Doctor?" who replied, "No!" "Why," said the other; "it's that you have prescribed a thousand times in your bills, and you prescribed it to me but the other day." "Pray, what is't, then?" said the Doctor. T'other answered him: "Sir, it's agarick." "Agarick!" quoth the Doctor, "is this agarick? O wonderful!"[1]

In such a state of things it is not surprising that among the public—who had to pay in the first place a fee to the physician for his advice to use a drug of which he often knew only the name, and in the second place an exorbitant price to the apothecary for the use of the drug of which he had the monopoly—there should have been a strong inclination to resort to unqualified practitioners.

Since (says the same pamphleteer from whom I have just quoted, writing as early as 1670) the condition of inferior tradesmen and servants will not admit of great expenses in physicians' fees, besides large prices for medicines, the Honourable College of Physicians would singularly acquit their duty to the public, in preventing their rash inconsiderate humour of running to Mountebanks, Empirics, or practising Apothecaries, for cheapness (so seeming), by appointing every three or four years one or two Junior Physicians in every Ward, whose visiting fee, they should be obliged by oath, shall not exceed a shilling, and their chamber fee sixpence, by which means many lives might be preserved, the young physician gain considerably enough by the frequency of patients and the multitude of visits, and very much improve his experience.

In other words, if the apothecaries poached upon the prescriptions of the doctors, there seemed to be a kind of rough justice in the doctors retaliating by dispensing the drugs of the apothecaries. The way had been prepared for such strategy by the innovations of Sydenham, who had largely reduced the number and the quantity of drugs used in the preparation of medicines. Hence the idea of the pamphleteer of 1670 took practical shape in the decree of the College, passed in 1687 and confirmed in 1694, for the gratuitous distribution of drugs, which may be said to be the starting-point in the

[1] *The Accomplished Physician*, 1670.

system of out-patients now established in every London Hospital. It naturally met at the time with strong opposition, for the City had a voice in the management of medical affairs, and the interest of the apothecaries was powerful among the trading classes. Little advance was therefore made by the College of Physicians beyond building the Dispensary, in which forty of the leading members of the profession, including Millington, the President of the College, Goodall, and Garth, engaged to carry out the decree by distributing medicines gratis to the poor. The apothecaries, however, had their allies in the College; and it was the efforts of this faction—headed by Barnard, a physician of high reputation, and Blackmore, whose influence was powerful among the merchants—to defeat the purpose of their colleagues which called forth *The Dispensary*.

Garth's work shows but little poetical invention. The essence of the mock-heroic is that a trivial subject shall be treated in a magnificent manner. But the building of the Dispensary had a serious object: the controversy excited wide public interest, and there was scarcely anything in the incidents of the quarrel, or in the persons of the combatants, which gave opportunity for comic treatment. The poet's only ideas of representing incongruity or paradox seem to have been to describe a peaceful profession in a state of war, and to elevate the action by the intervention of allegorical personages, such as Sloth, Envy, Disease, and Fortune. He supposes Sloth to have chosen the College as his favourite abode, and to have been aroused from his slumbers by the building of the Dispensary.[1] Sloth sends his "phantom" in quest of Envy, who takes the form of Colon (Lee, warden of the Apothecaries' Hall) and rouses Horoscope (Barnard) to prevent the completion of the new building. Both parties hold councils, which give the poet an opening for the introduction of a number of satirical portraits and many speeches; but nothing is done till

[1] All the action in the opening of *The Dispensary* is imitated from *Le Lutrin*.

the fifth canto, when there is a kind of scuffling battle, ending in a single combat between Stentor (Goodall) and Querpo (Howe) founded, it is said, on a real incident. Celsus (Bateman), one of the leading heroes among the physicians, in the sixth canto, is despatched as a messenger to the Elysian Fields, where he finds the spirit of Harvey; and the latter ends the poem with a general exhortation to both parties to compose their quarrel in a spirit of harmony and benevolence.

This is not very promising for the modern reader; still there can be no doubt that, in its own day, *The Dispensary* made a mark which entitles it to a permanent place in English poetry. It struck a new vein (for *Mac-Flecknoe*, as I have said, is so personal in its scope as hardly to fall within epic lines) and thus prepared the way for *The Rape of the Lock* and *The Dunciad.* Eleven editions of the poem, extending far into the second half of the eighteenth century, show that the public interest in the persons and things satirised was wide and deep. Garth spent great pains in the polishing of his verse; many excellent individual lines have become monumental as quotations, and some of the descriptive passages deserve to live. Of the latter the lines describing the College of Physicians have the true mock-heroic ring:—

> Not far from that most celebrated place
> Where angry Justice shows her awful face,
> Where little villains must submit to fate,
> That great ones may enjoy the world in state;
> There stands a dome majestic to the sight,
> And sumptuous arches raise its oval height:
> A golden globe, placed high with artful skill,
> Seems to the distant sight a gilded pill.

Horoscope's "shop" is painted in strong and vivid strokes:[1]—

> Long has he been of that amphibious fry,
> Bold to prescribe and busy to apply:
> His shop the gazing vulgar's eyes employs
> With foreign trinkets and domestic toys.

[1] *Dispensary*, Canto i.

Here mummies lay most reverently stale,
And there the tortoise hung her coat of mail.
Not far from some huge shark's devouring head
The flying-fish their finny pinions spread:
Aloft in rows large poppy-heads were strung,
And near a scaly alligator hung:
In this place drugs in musty heaps decayed;
In that dried bladders and drawn teeth were laid.[1]

But the two features which gave the Satire its chief vogue were its personality and the political spirit by which it was animated. So many well-known men were attacked in it that the world was naturally curious to see what could be said against them, just as afterwards happened with the heroes of *The Dunciad*. Pope's fame preserves an interest in the men of Grub Street, which is not aroused by the victims of Garth, with the possible exception of Blackmore, whose *Prince Arthur* and *King Arthur* are rather clumsily satirised in *The Dispensary*.[2] But it is historically instructive to observe in this poem how strongly the social and professional quarrels of the time are coloured with political party spirit. Garth was a zealous Whig. He misses no opportunity of introducing a compliment to William III. and the leading Whig statesmen, or a side stroke at a Tory sheriff; while he skilfully insinuates that the cause of the apothecaries is part and parcel of the old and corrupt mediæval *régime*. There is a good vein of satire in the speech with which Diasenna (Gilstrop), an apothecary, is made to celebrate the golden age of dear drugs:—

Thrice happy were those golden days of old,
When dear as Burgundy ptisans were sold;
When patients chose to die, with better will
Than breathe and pay the apothecary's bill;
And cheaper than for our assistance call
Might go to Aix or Bourbon, spring or fall!
Then priests increased and piety decayed;
Churchmen the Church's purity betrayed;
Their lives and doctrines slaves and atheists made:
The laws were but the hireling judge's sense;
Juries were swayed by venal evidence;

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[1] *Dispensary*, Canto ii.
[2] *Ibid.* Canto iv.

Fools were promoted to the council board,
Tools to the bench, and bullies to the sword.
Pensions in private were the senate's aim,
And patriots for a place abandoned fame.
But now no influencing art remains,
For Somers has the seal, and Nassau reigns;
And we, in spite of our resolves, must bow,
And suffer by a reformation too.[1]

A much greater master of mock-heroic style than Garth was John Philips, best known, perhaps, by name as the author of *The Splendid Shilling*, though this was far from being his best poetical performance. He was the son of Dr. Stephen Philips, Archdeacon of Salop, and was born on the 30th of December 1676, at Bampton in Oxfordshire, of which place his father held the living. He was educated first at Winchester, and afterwards at Christ Church, Oxford, where he was one of the chief friends of "Rag" Smith, who afterwards wrote an account of his life. The latter says that *The Splendid Shilling* was written before Philips was twenty, though it seems not to have been published till 1701, when it appeared in *A Collection of Poems* printed by David Brown and Ben Tooke. Probably it gradually attracted attention, for in 1705 it was printed—as Smith relates, surreptitiously—in a separate folio form by Ben Bragge, which caused the author to issue in the same year a correct edition through the hands of the Tory bookseller, Thomas Bennet. It was now so generally admired that, when Addison published *The Campaign*, Harley, who was resolved that the Tories should not be behind their rivals in celebrating Marlborough's victory, engaged Philips to be the poet of the party for the occasion. *Blenheim* was accordingly written in the house of St. John, then Secretary of State for War, to whom, in the conclusion of the poem, Philips pays the usual elaborate compliment:—

Thus from the noisy world exempt, with ease
And plenty blest, amid the mazy groves

[1] *Dispensary*, Canto iii.

derived from Greek and Latin sources, and worthy of an Athenian and Roman audience; since indeed he had learned to modulate the harmony of verse in that ancient, free, and multiform rhythm, entirely suitable and congenial to the subject, not in numbers almost exactly repeating themselves, or in clauses of a similar cadence; an excellent kind of style in which Milton alone was his superior." Philips had the same fine perception of the capacities of metrical language that has already been noticed in Crashaw. He was perhaps less of an original musician than the latter poet; on the other hand, he had a truer intuition of the relationship between subject and style; and, when he was on his own ground, no English poet ever approached so nearly to the manner of Virgil in the *Georgics*. Johnson is perhaps rather inconsistent in his account of the style of *The Splendid Shilling*:—

To *degrade* the sounding words and stately construction of Milton, by an application to the lowest and most trivial things, gratifies the mind with a momentary triumph over that grandeur which hitherto held its captives in admiration; the words and things are presented with a new appearance, and novelty is always grateful where it gives no pain.

If "the words and things are presented with a new appearance," they can scarcely be said to be "degraded," and Edmund Smith is more philosophical when he says:—

It is much easier to make a great thing appear little than a little one great: Cotton and others of a very low genius have done the former, but Philips, Garth, and Boileau, only the latter.

Still, *The Splendid Shilling*—which describes, in a Miltonic style, the shifts to which the poverty-stricken student is put to avoid the dun and the bailiff—is perhaps too obviously a parody. But this is not the case with *Cider*. Here the poet is dealing with the common things of life, having yet a certain beauty of their own, which can be best expressed by the humours and the *nuances* of mock-heroic verse. Philips gives the reader the double pleasure of a faithful description of natural objects, and an ingenious

reproduction of the grand Virgilian manner. Nothing can be happier than his imitation of his master in his instructions to the farmer as to the choice of soil for his orchard:—

> Nor from the sable ground expect success,
> Nor from cretaceous, stubborn and jejune.

Or again:—

> [illegible]
> [illegible]
> Its native poverty again prevails.

There is a delightful humour in the poet's advice as to the kind of scarecrow which ought to be used:—

> It much conduces all the cares to know
> Of gardening, how to scare nocturnal thieves,
> And how the little race of birds that hop
> From spray to spray, scooping the costliest fruit,
> Insatiate, undisturbed. Priapus' form
> [illegible]
> [illegible] fancy represents
> His mortal talons and his ravenous beak,
> Destructive; *glad to* 'scape his hostile gripe,
> They quit their thefts, and unfrequent the fields.

The invasion of the snail is also most picturesquely described:—

> The flagrant Procyon will not fail to bring
> Large shoals of slow house-bearing snails, that creep
> O'er the ripe fruitage, paring slimy tracts
> In the sleek rinds, and unprest cider drink.
> No art averts this *pest*; on thee it lies
> With morning and with evening hand to rid
> The preying reptiles, nor, if wise, wilt thou
> Decline this labour, which itself rewards
> With pleasing gain, whilst the warm limbec drains
> Salubrious waters from the nocent brood.

Philips is a master of all the arts by which Virgil and the best didactic poets elevate their subject above its ordinary level; in the judicious selection of what is picturesque in his rustic theme; in the contrasts of his arrangements; in the skilful juncture of his paragraphs; in his transitions from the technical to the imaginative and pathetic; he accomplishes the same feat as Denham in *Cooper's Hill.* How humorous, and yet how dignified in its humour, is this picture of rustic merriment in winter!

When the aged year
Inclines, and Boreas' spirit blusters frore,
Beware the inclement heavens; nor let thy hearth
Crackle with juiceless boughs; thy lingering blood
Now instigate with th' apples' powerful streams.
Perpetual showers and stormy gusts confine
The willing ploughman, and December wanes
To annual jollities; now sportive youth
Carol incondite rhymes, with suiting notes
And quaver unharmonious; sturdy swains,
In clean array, for rustic dance prepare,
Mixt with the buxom damsels; hand in hand
They frisk and bound, and various mazes weave,
Shaking their brawny limbs with uncouth mien,
Transported; and sometimes an oblique leer
Dart on their loves; sometimes a hasty kiss
Steal from unwary lasses; they, with scorn,
And neck reclined, resent the ravished bliss.

He has all the local patriotism of Browne of Tavistock[1]:

Hail Herefordian plant, that dost disdain
All other fields! Heaven's sweetest blessing, hail!
Be thou the copious matter of my song,
And thy choice nectar, on which always waits
Laughter, and sport, and care-beguiling wit,
And friendship, sweet delight of human life.
What should we wish for more? or why in quest
Of foreign vintage, insincere and mixt,
Traverse the extremest world? why tempt the rage
Of the rough Ocean? when our native glebe
Imparts from bounteous womb annual recruits
Of wine delectable, that far surmounts
Gallic or Latin grapes, or those that see
The setting sun near Calpe's towering height.

[1] Vol. iii. p. 49.

As Garth fills *The Dispensary* with Whig sentiments and compliments, Philips is equally emphatic in his praises of the Tories and his reflections on the Roundheads:—

Can we forget how the mad headstrong rout
Defied their prince to arms, nor made account
Of faith or duty or allegiance sworn?
Apostate atheist rebels! bent to ill,
With seeming sanctity and covered fraud,
Instilled by him who first presumed to oppose
Omnipotence; alike their crime; the event
Was not alike: these triumphed, and in height
Of barbarous malice and insulting pride,
Abstained not from imperial blood. O fact
Unparalleled! O Charles! O best of Kings!
What stars their black disastrous influence shed
On thy nativity, that thou shouldst fall
Thus by inglorious hands, in this thy realm,
Supreme and innocent, adjudged to death
By those thy mercy only would have saved!

Philips is not to be held altogether responsible for the failure of *Blenheim*, of which Johnson says:—

He imitates Milton's numbers indeed, but imitates them very injudiciously. Deformity is easily copied; and whatever there is in Milton which the reader wishes away, all that is obsolete, peculiar, or licentious, is accumulated with great care by Philips. Milton's verse was harmonious, in proportion to the general state of our metre in Milton's age; and if he had written after the improvements made by Dryden, it is reasonable to believe that he would have admitted a more pleasing modulation of numbers into his work; but Philips sits down with a resolution to make no more music than he found—to want all that his master wanted, though he is very far from having what his master had. Those asperities therefore that are venerable in the *Paradise Lost* are contemptible in the *Blenheim*.[1]

Making allowance for the complete deafness of Johnson to the music of *Paradise Lost*, there is substantial truth in this criticism. Philips' genius was for mock-heroic; but in *Blenheim* he seeks to imitate Milton's heroic style seriously, and the style is not suited to the subject. For panegyric the neatness and epigrammatic

[1] *Lives of the Poets*: *John Philips*.

point of the couplet was far better adapted than was the more subtle and varied harmony of blank verse; besides which the inevitable appearance of parody leaves in the mind an impression of the ludicrous. We have only to compare the elegance, dignity, and occasional loftiness of *The Campaign* with the inflated diction of *Blenheim* to recognise the superior judgment shown by Addison. Forced to give an air of greatness to objects not yet seen in right perspective, Philips, in order to avoid the charge brought against Dryden of having used technical terms in his *Annus Mirabilis*, sought, like Lucan, to translate each phrase of ordinary use into some form of poetical diction. The result was lines like the following in a description of the Battle of Blenheim:—

Now from each
The brazen instruments of death discharge
Horrific flames, and turbid streaming clouds
Of smoke sulphureous; intermixt with these
Large globous irons fly, of dreadful hiss,
Singeing the air, and from long distance bring
Surprising slaughter; on each side they fly
By chains connext, and with destructive sweep
Behead whole troops at once; the hairy scalps
Are whirled aloof, while numerous trunks bestrew
The ensanguined field: with latent mischief stored
Showers of granadoes rain, by sudden burst
Disploding numerous bowels, fragments of steel,
And stones, and glass, and nitrous grain adust.
A thousand ways at once the shivered orbs
Fly diverse, working torment and foul rout,
With deadly bruise and gashes furrowed deep.
Of pain impatient the high-prancing steeds
Disdain the curb, and flinging to and fro
Spurn their dismounted riders; they expire
Indignant, by unhostile wounds destroyed.

In judging such lines it seems not unfair to invert the criticism of Johnson, and to say that Miltonic blank verse may be used, in a mock-heroic vein, "to recommend to our attention the act of engrafting, and decide the merit of the *red-streak* and the *pear-main*"; but that it only serves to degrade what is really heroic in the shock of con-

tending armies, which are not angelic.[1] On the other hand, it is to be remembered on behalf of Philips that the poem was written to order, and that he was selected to execute the task because his employers, with great want of discrimination, thought that his grandiose style was capable of elevating any subject. If he had attempted to write in a manner better suited to his theme, he would not have done what was expected of him. He ought to be judged in his own department, and in that his is the merit of having first shown the capacities of blank verse for didactic poetry, and having been the pioneer of the style afterwards developed by Thomson and Cowper.

[1] "Contending angels may shake the regions of heaven in blank-verse; but the flow of equal measures, and the embellishment of rhyme must recommend to our attention the art of engrafting, and decide the merit of the *red-streak* and the *pear-main*."—Johnson, *Life of Philips*.

CHAPTER IV

RECONSTRUCTION OF THE SOCIAL STANDARD OF TASTE

The Tatler AND *The Spectator*

HOWEVER marked were the indications of new thoughts and feelings in the public mind, reflected as they were in poems like *The Dispensary*, *Cider*, and *Creation*, they could never have produced of themselves a national order of art and literature. By the flight of James II. English society was left without the guidance it had hitherto received in matters of taste. The ancient system of semi-Gothic imagination that had formed itself round the Court was, by the Revolution, thrown into ruins, and the violent and extravagant traditions, fostered by the Royalist Reaction, were the only artistic models that enjoyed any prestige with the people. If a sound Public Opinion in morals and manners was to be built up, it could only be under the conscious guidance of sagacious minds giving a fresh development to the established institutions of the country. Fortunately the men available for the task were equal to its accomplishment.

One of the circumstances most favourable to the formation of Public Opinion was the rapid growth of the London Coffee-houses. Coffee, introduced into England under the Commonwealth, was at first regarded as a mere medicine, but, from its stimulating qualities, soon became popular as a drink, and (it may be presumed), from its non-intoxicating character, was found to promote at once society and discussion. It was in a Coffee-house that the Rota Club met for their philosophical debates before

the Restoration; and afterwards these places afforded a natural rendezvous, not only for the "quidnuncs," who were chiefly concerned with killing time, but also for the adherents of the old Republican *régime*, who discussed in them the Absolutist designs of the Government. I have already given specimens of the poetical "libels" written by Andrew Marvell, which circulated in MS. from hand to hand in the Coffee-houses; and it was doubtless these lampoons which, in 1666, made the Chancellor Clarendon so keen either to put down the Coffee-houses or to place them under the supervision of spies.[1] Escaping from either fate at that time, through the opposition of Sir William Coventry, the Coffee-houses were for a brief period threatened with suppression in 1675:

> Whereas (so ran the Proclamation of that year) it is most apparent that the multitude of Coffee-houses of late years set up and kept within this kingdom, the dominion of Wales, and the town of Berwick-on-Tweed, and the great resort of idle and disaffected persons to them, have produced very evil and dangerous effects; as well for that many tradesmen and others do herein misspend much of their time, which might, and probably would be employed in and about their lawful callings and affairs, but also for that in such houses . . . divers false, malicious and scandalous reports are devised and spread abroad to the defamation of His Majesty's Government, and to the disturbance of the peace and quiet of the Realm, his Majesty hath thought it fit and necessary that such Coffee-houses be [for the future] put down and suppressed, and doth strictly charge and command all manner of persons that they or any of them do not presume, from and after the Tenth day of January next ensuing, to keep any Public Coffee-House, or to utter or sell by retail, in his, her, or their house or houses (to be spent or consumed within the same) any Coffee, Chocolate, Sherbert, or Tea, as they will answer the contrary on their eminent peril.[2]

The policy of this Proclamation was soon found to be mistaken, and it was withdrawn. Coffee-houses continued to serve as centres for the champions of the Country Party until the Revolution, after which date they

[1] *Life of Edward, Earl of Clarendon*, under the year 1666.
[2] Compare Andrew Marvell's verses on the subject cited in vol. ii. p. [illegible]

gradually declined into mere rallying-points for particular sections of society, the most famous of them being White's Chocolate House, the shrine, as Steele shows us, of "Gallantry, Pleasure, and Entertainment"; Will's Coffee-House, the favourite haunt of the votaries of Wit and Poetry; The Grecian, famous for the learning of its customers; and St. James's, the most authoritative centre for all "Foreign and Domestic News."[1] No one who studies the history of our manners can fail to be struck with the number of letters in *The Spectator* reflecting on points of behaviour and opinion in the Coffee-houses, and showing that these institutions afforded to the observation of Addison the same materials that, on a smaller scale, the middle aisle of Old St. Paul's furnished to Ben Jonson.

But while this multitude of social Parliaments outside the House of Commons enabled each small circle of Englishmen to form its own public opinion, some central focus was required, if the general sense of society was to make head against the organised lead given to the nation by the manners of the Court. And here again circumstances had gradually prepared the necessary intellectual organism in the growth of the periodical press. As the use of what was originally a medical drug had eventually brought individuals together to discuss high points of liberty and morality, so the supply of the News-Letter, to satisfy the craving of men for the latest tidings of what other men were saying or doing, had led to the passing of public judgments on these reported actions or opinions. The Government, which was the chief mark of this unrecognised tribunal, was naturally even more eager to suppress the Newspaper than the Coffee-house; and it sought to effect its purpose by the patent granted to Roger L'Estrange in 1663, giving him "the sole privilege of writing, printing, and publishing all Narratives, Advertisements, Mercuries, Intelligencers, Diurnals, and other books of public intelligence." Out of this privilege, which was intended to supplement the deficiencies in the Licensing Act of 1662, grew the office of Gazetteer; but neither

[1] *Tatler*, No. 1.

that nor the Act itself—which, after having lapsed in 1679, was renewed for seven years in 1685—sufficed to prevent the appearance of many unlicensed periodicals; so that, when the Licensing Act expired in 1692, it was resolved not to renew it. Newspapers appeared again in great numbers, with all the characteristics of the old "Mercuries" satirised by Ben Jonson in his *Staple of News*; but, as the liberties of the country had now been secured by the Bill of Rights, the reflections on Government itself were naturally less exasperating; and a tendency became manifest to turn the organs of public opinion in the press into instruments of self-reformation on behalf of a practically self-governing people.

Such were the chaotic conditions of Public Opinion when Steele, in *The Tatler*, took the first step towards setting up a new tribunal of taste and manners:—

> The state of conversation and business in this town (says he in the first number) having long been perplexed with pretenders in both kinds, in order to open men's minds against such abuses, it appeared no unprofitable undertaking to publish a Paper, which should observe upon the manners of the pleasurable as well as the busy part of mankind. To make this generally read, it seemed the most proper method to form it by way of a Letter of Intelligence, consisting of such parts as might gratify the curiosity of persons of all conditions and of each sex. . . . The general purpose of this paper is to expose the false arts of life, to pull off the disguises of cunning, vanity, and affectation, and to recommend a general simplicity in our dress, our discourse, and our behaviour.

The biography of Richard Steele, who in these words announces himself as the first literary pioneer in the Reformation of taste and manners, lies beyond the province of our History. Steele was in no sense a poet. But of his friend and school-fellow, his chief coadjutor in *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, to whose fine fancy, elevated feeling, and sound judgment, we owe it that the reforming movement was popularised in English society, this seems to be the fitting place to give some account.

Joseph Addison was the eldest son of Lancelot

Addison, Dean of Lichfield. He was born on the 1st of May 1672, at Milston, near Amesbury, in Wiltshire, of which parish his father was then Rector. He was educated first at Amesbury in the school of one Nash, afterwards at the Grammar School, Lichfield, and next at the Charterhouse, then under the charge of Dr. Ellis. From the Charterhouse in 1687 he passed to Queen's College, Oxford, but after he had been for two years a member of that College, one of the Fellows, Dr. Lancaster, struck by the excellence of his Latin verse procured him a demyship at Magdalen, whence he proceeded to his M.A. degree in 1693. He was elected probationary Fellow of his college in 1697, and became an actual Fellow in 1698. To retain his Fellowship it was necessary for him to take orders, and he would have done so, had it not been for the intervention of Charles Montague, who, being anxious to enlist his talents in the service of the Whigs, persuaded the President of Magdalen not to insist too rigidly on the condition. Addison had in 1697 dedicated to Montague his admirable Latin poem on the Peace of Ryswick ; in recompense for which compliment the latter, in 1699, procured for him a temporary pension of £300 a year, that he might travel to learn foreign languages, and so prepare himself for political employment.

To Montague, now become Baron Halifax, Addison addressed, as we have seen, his fine *Letter from Italy* ; but, on his return to England after an absence of four years, he found that his patron had been removed from office. For some little time he seems to have lived in obsc[illegible] he was [illegible]cted a member of the Kit-Kat Clu[illegible] of t[illegible]co-literary societies which so [illegible] of affairs in the reign of Q[illegible]

in the Excise: within two years he was made Under Secretary of State to Sir Charles Hedges, a Tory, who was soon replaced by the Earl of Sunderland, a Whig. This appointment he held for nearly three years, but lost it when the Earl of Sunderland was removed to make room for Lord Dartmouth; but, still a favourite of fortune, he was almost immediately offered the Secretaryship of Ireland by the Earl of Wharton, who had been recently made Lord-Lieutenant. In this capacity he was serving when Steele founded *The Tatler*, and soon recognising the hand of the disguised editor, he wrote to him offering his literary assistance, which was of course joyfully accepted.

Hitherto Addison's career, like Montague's, had mainly illustrated the power acquired by literature in determining the course of public affairs. His own poetical panegyrics were adroitly contrived to catch the prevailing Whig breeze in politics; and even *The Tatler* was the offspring mainly of a desire to provide entertainment for the busy and bustling interests of the town, always in quest of some "new thing." It was an ingenious development of the old "Mercury," or, as Steele called it, a "Letter of Intelligence, consisting of such parts as might gratify the curiosity of persons of all conditions and of each sex." *The Spectator*, on the other hand, founded after the lapse of *The Tatler*, addressed a wider audience, and with a more definitely moral design It sought to interest all open minds which were in search of ideas.—

Since (says Addison) I have raised to myself so great an audience, I shall spare no pains to make their instruction agreeable and their diversion useful. For which reason I shall endeavour to enliven morality with wit, and to temper wit with morality, that my readers may, if possible, both ways find their account in the speculation of the day. And to the end that their virtue and discretion may not be short, transient, intermitting starts of thought, I have resolved to refresh their memories from day to day, till I have recovered them out of that desperate state of vice and folly into which the age has fallen The mind that lies fallow but a single day sprouts up in follies, that are only to be killed by a constant and assiduous culture.

It was said of Socrates that he brought philosophy down from heaven to inhabit among men; and I shall be ambitious to have it said of me that I have brought philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and in coffee-houses.[1]

To set up a social standard of philosophy some different kind of fiction was required from that which had sufficed for *The Tatler*, the design of which was rather critical than constructive. Hence, instead of the four leading Coffee-houses, with the rush of their clients coming and going, and the single figure of the Editor, discriminating between novelties false and true, the machinery of *The Spectator* turned on the idea of a single Club, containing in itself representatives of the constituent parts of society, the Church, the Bar, the Army, the Landed Interest, the Monied Interest, the Interest of the World of Fashion, together with the Spectator himself, who is interested in all sorts and conditions of men, and judges how far their several opinions are just and reasonable. It being recognised that the reaction in the previous age against the Puritan *régime* had plunged society as a whole into a desperate condition of vice and folly, the object of *The Spectator* was to recover it to a state of good morals and manners by means of debates in the Club, or by the reflections and example of its individual members. The method of reformation pursued by Addison may therefore be considered under the heads of Religion, Manners, and Taste.

As regards Religion, the actual progress of thought in England since the rejection by the nation of the Papal supremacy is very faithfully reflected in the parallel development of its philosophy and its poetry. The most philosophical definition of the Constitutional situation of the Christian Church in England is probably to be found in the words of Hooker I have already cited:—

Our state is according to the pattern of God's own ancient elect people, which people was not part of them the Commonwealth, and part of them the Church of God, but the self-same

[1] *Spectator*, No. 10.

very bane of mirth and good-humour. Prythee don't value thyself on thy reason at that exorbitant rate, and the dignity of human nature; take my word for it a setting dog has as good reason as any man in England.[1]

Opposed at all points to the licentiousness of fashionable society, the Puritans, through their theology, exerted a powerful influence over numbers of individuals in every section of society, and more particularly among the commercial and professional classes. In these the sense of religion was so strong as to swallow up every other human instinct; not only was the most innocent kind of pleasure a sin in their eyes, but the feeling of their own responsibility was so great as to make them eager to impose their opinions upon all their neighbours. The victory of their party in the Civil War had placed in their hands power which they had so used that, after groaning for many years under their yoke, the people preferred to submit themselves to all the excesses of the Royalist reaction. Yet, though conscious of their unpopularity, the Puritans preserved with sullen tenacity all the rigidity of their principles, and after the Revolution of 1688, sought to take advantage of the turn of the tide to restore the rule of the Saints. Their character and creed are both sketched with some humour in No. 454 of *The Spectator.*

Between these two extremes the great body of the nation recognised the necessity of obeying some established form of the Christian religion, but were in doubt to what degree of authority they ought to submit. During the whole period between the Restoration and the Revolution their minds wavered between loyalty to the reigning Sovereigns, who were plainly trying to restore the Papal Supremacy, and their attachment to the national Church, of which, by the true theory of the Constitution, the King was the rightful head. On the one side were the arguments of the Roman Catholic disputants from Bellarmine to Bossuet; on the other the reasoning of the Anglican divines from Hooker to Stillingfleet. The Papists showed

[1] *Spectator*, No. 158.

them the impossibility of preserving the Unity of the Faith from the heresies of the Sects, except by the authority of one Infallible Head of the Church: the English Churchman replied by denying that liberty of judgment ought to be sacrificed to the fallible authority of any single interpreter of Holy Writ. Thus many wavered between the mood of mind depicted, under Charles II., in *Religio Laici*, and the Roman Catholic conclusion advocated, under James II., in *The Hind and the Panther*. By the Revolution of 1688 the nation decided that the extent of authority, postulated in the former poem, was sufficient for its needs; but though it had rejected the infallibility of the Pope, peace was far from being secured to it, and the Anglican controversialists found that they had only freed themselves from their Roman antagonists to be engaged in a conflict with the Deists. The period of the half-century following the Revolution of 1688 is characterised by the "Socinian" reasoning of Tindal, Toland, Collins, and Woolston.

It was to reach the minds of the wavering portion of the nation that Addison addressed his arguments in *The Spectator*:—

> Those (he says, in *Spectator* No 465) who delight in reading books of controversy, which are written on both sides of the question on points of faith, do very seldom arrive at a fixed and settled habit of it. They are one day entirely convinced of its important truths, and the next meet with something that shakes and disturbs them. The doubt which was laid revives again, and shows itself in new difficulties, and that generally for this reason, because the mind which is perpetually tost in controversies and disputes is apt to forget the reasons which had once set it at rest, and to be disquieted with any former perplexity when it appears in a new shape, or is started by a different hand. As nothing is more laudable than an enquiry after truth, so nothing is more irrational than to pass away our whole lives without determining ourselves one way or another in those points which are of the last importance to us. There are indeed many things from which we may withhold our assent; but in cases by which we are to regulate our lives, it is the greatest absurdity to be wavering and unsettled, without closing with that side which appears the most safe and the most probable.

It will be noticed that, as far as the question of faith goes, this argument is not very different from that in *Religio Laici*: "the things we must believe are few and plain." But Addison scarcely ever touches on the dogmas of the Christian Religion. As it was his ambition to bring "philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and in coffee-houses," his reasoning about religion is of that plain, almost naïve, character which is adapted to the average intelligence of men, and shuns the subtleties of the Schoolmen. It is based on the reasonableness of natural religion, and proceeds sometimes on a view of the order of the universe, as, for example:—

The Supreme Being has made the best arguments for his own existence in the formation of the heavens and the earth; and these are arguments which a man of sense cannot forbear attending to, who is out of the noise and hurry of human affairs. Aristotle says that, should a man live underground, and there converse with works of art and mechanism, and should afterwards be brought up into the open day, and see the several glories of the heaven and earth, he would immediately pronounce them to be the works of such a being as we define God to be.[1]

At other times *The Spectator* argues from the immortality of the Soul:—

I considered (he says) those several proofs drawn,

First, from the nature of the Soul itself, and particularly from its immateriality, which, though not absolutely necessary to the eternity of its duration, has, I think, been evinced to almost a demonstration.

Secondly, from its passions and sentiments, as particularly from its love of existence, its horror of annihilation, and its hopes of immortality, with that secret satisfaction which it finds in the practice of virtue, and that uneasiness which follows in it upon the commission of vice.

Thirdly, from the nature of the Supreme Being, whose justice, goodness, wisdom, and veracity are all concerned in this great point.[2]

But when he has once laid his foundations on the

[1] *Spectator*, No. 465.

[2] *Ibid.* No. 111.

reasonableness of natural Religion he proceeds, like Dryden in *Religio Laici*, to establish the necessity of the Christian Revelation, and reaches, as a final conclusion, the duty of all men to accept the form of the Catholic Religion established in their country.[1] As it was his object to form in the midst of the nation a steady nucleus of religious practice, there are few appeals in *The Spectator* to religious emotion: the nearest approach to personal feeling on the subject is Steele's paper on Good Friday.[2] Addison, whose strong personal religion is not to be questioned, contents himself with defining the limits of religious action. He has a hearty dislike of all who attempt to weaken the sanctions of Revelation, and apparently comprehends under the head of atheism such deistic works as *Christianity not Mysterious* and *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, which, in his opinion, are the offspring of vanity and self-love. Zeal for dogma he holds to be usually mischievous, whether it be exercised on behalf of Calvinism or Atheism; he is for cheerful piety as opposed to austerity, for devotion as distinguished from enthusiasm, for reasonable worship but not for superstition.

> Nothing (he says) is so glorious in the eyes of mankind and [illegible] that expose us to the scorn and derision of infidels, and sink us even below the beasts that perish.[3]

These words may be taken as the standard of the more religiously disposed part of society between the close of the irreligious period of the Restoration and the rise of the Methodist movement in the reign of George II.

The same practical aim shines in Addison's attempt to reform the manners of society by means of his essays in *The Spectator*.

> To teach (says Johnson) the minuter decencies and inferior

[1] This conclusion is insisted on in numerous papers of *The Spectator*, good examples of which will be found in Nos. 185, 186.

[2] *Spectator*, No. 356.

[3] *Ibid.* No. 201.

duties, to regulate the practice of daily conversation, to correct those depravities which are rather ridiculous than criminal, and remove those grievances which, if they produce no lasting calamities, impress hourly vexation, was first attempted by Casa in his book of *Manners*, and Castiglione in his *Courtier*; two books yet celebrated in Italy for purity and elegance, and which, if they are now less read, are neglected only because they have effected that reformation which their authors intended, and their precepts now are no longer wanted.[1]

If these words indicate partially the objects aimed at by Steele and Addison in *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, the comparison with the work of Casa and Castiglione does but imperfect justice to the greatness of the task undertaken by the English writers, or to the merits of their performance. Casa and Castiglione had merely to codify rules of manners which, if not universally recognised in polite Italian society, were at least observed in Courts like that of the Dukes of Urbino.[2] The feat of bringing order out of social chaos, which was accomplished by Addison, has more analogy to the achievement of Catherine de Vivonne in constituting the standard of manners in the Hôtel Rambouillet. But the French Marchioness started with resources which were not at the disposal of any English social reformer, for not only had all the rules of chivalrous behaviour been preserved in French society, but the supremacy of Woman, the most powerful agency in domestic life, was as fully recognised, if not always as systematically exerted, in the reign of Henri IV. as it had been in the days of the Countess of Champagne and the *Cours d'Amour*. Addison and Steele, on the contrary, had alike to contend against the prestige of the Wits of the Restoration, who had overthrown all the standards of chivalrous behaviour, and to persuade women to resume the just power which they had abdicated under Charles II. For the achievement of the former part of the task the greater share of the credit is perhaps due to Steele. Steele was by temperament better qualified than Addison to judge of the power of social pleasure over human

[1] *Lives of the Poets: Addison.*

[2] Vol. ii. pp. 16-17.

nature: he had mixed freely in the fashionable pursuits of the age: he was well acquainted with all the tastes that had given rise to the Caroline drama, and he had himself figured as a playwright. He is, therefore, the more to be admired for the courage with which he opposed himself to the corrupted views of Love and Honour, which had been handed down to society from the Restoration era. His papers on duelling in *The Tatler*, and his ridicule of the fashionable opinions about the relations between men and women, established in the drawing-room as well as represented on the stage, are as sure a proof of his moral courage, as his lively treatment of the character of Will Honeycomb is of the penetration of his wit. No one could have described better than Steele did, in the letter of Simon Honeycomb, the standard of English morals prevailing at the close of the seventeenth century:—

In all this course of time, and some years following, I found a sober, modest man was always looked upon by both sexes as a precise, unfashioned fellow of no life or spirit. It was ordinary for a man who had been drunk in good company, or passed a night with a wench, to speak of it next day before women for whom he had the greatest respect. He was reproved perhaps with the blow of a fan, or an "Oh, fie!" but the angry lady still preserved an apparent approbation in her countenance. He was called a strange, wicked fellow, a sad wretch; he shrugs his shoulders, swears, receives another blow, swears again he did not know he swore, and all was well. You might often see men game in the presence of women, and throw at once for more than they were worth, to recommend themselves as men of spirit. I found by long experience that the loosest principles and most abandoned behaviour carried all before them in pretensions to women of fortune.[1]

A confession of this kind shows how far, at this time, Engli[illegible]
Th[illegible]
rei[illegible] years after the accession of James I.—when their influence on taste and manners had been felt within a limited circle. The poems of Spenser, Ben Jonson, and Donne, all bear witness to the veneration felt for noble

[1] *Spectator*, No. 154.

and high-minded ladies, like the Countesses of Bedford, Huntingdon, Salisbury, and many others, who gave the tone to the innermost circle of the Court.[1] But this female influence, long declining, passed away with the downfall of Charles I.; and the debauchery of the court of Charles II. rendered its revival impossible. In the turbulent atmosphere of that time masculine genius alone could prevail; so that, while new ideas of liberty had taken organic shape in the Coffee-houses, there was no society like that of the Hôtel Rambouillet from which the female sex could diffuse its influence through the community at large. Woman, therefore, was in danger of sinking in England into a court toy or a household drudge, positions from which Addison, in *The Spectator*, announces his intention of reclaiming her:—

> There are none to whom this paper will be more useful than to the female world. I have often thought there has not been sufficient pains taken in finding out proper employments and diversions for the fair ones. Their amusements seem contrived for them rather as they are women, than as they are reasonable creatures, and are more adapted to the sex than to the species. The toilet is their great scene of business, and the right adjusting of their hair the principal employment of their lives. The sorting of a suit of ribands is reckoned a very good morning's work; and if they make an excursion to a mercer's or a toy-shop, so great a fatigue makes them unable for anything else all the day after. Their more serious occupations are sewing and embroidery, and their greatest drudgery the preparation of jellies and sweetmeats. This I say is the state of ordinary women; though I know there are multitudes of those of a more elevated life and conversation, that move in an exalted sphere of knowledge and virtue, that join all the beauties of the mind to the ornaments of dress, and inspire a kind of awe and respect, as well as love, into their male beholders.[2]

Steele's ridicule of the "women's men" of the previous generation, joined to Addison's endeavours to make feminine charm and delicacy an element in social intercourse, soon proved successful as may be seen by the

[1] See, for example, Ben Jonson's lines cited in vol. iii. p. 182, and Donne's in the same vol. p. 165.

[2] *Spectator*, No. 10.

exultant tone of Addison in a comparatively early number of *The Spectator*:—

In the meanwhile, as I have taken the ladies under my particular care, I shall make it my business to find out in the best authors, ancient and modern, such passages as may be for their use, and endeavour to accommodate them as well as I can to their taste; not questioning but that the valuable part of the sex will easily pardon me, if from time to time I laugh at those little vanities and follies which appear in the behaviour of some of them, and which are more proper for ridicule than a serious censure. Most books being calculated for male readers, and generally written with an eye to men of learning, makes a work of this nature the more necessary; besides I am the more encouraged because I flatter myself that I see the sex daily improving by these my speculations. My fair readers are already deeper scholars than the beaux. I could name some of them who talk much better than several gentlemen that make a great figure at Will's; and as I frequently receive letters from the fine ladies and pretty fellows, I cannot but observe that the former are superior to the others, not only in the sense but in the spelling. This cannot but have a good effect upon the female world, and keep them from being charmed by those empty coxcombs that have hitherto been admired among the women, though laughed at among the men I am credibly informed that Tom Tattle passes for an impertinent fellow, that Will Trippet begins to be smoked, and that Frank Smoothly himself is within a month of a coxcomb, in case I think fit to continue this paper. For my part, as it is my business in some measure to detect such as would lead astray weak minds by their false pretences to wit and judgment, humour and gallantry, I shall not fail to lend the best lights I am able to the fair sex for the continuation of their discoveries.[1]

From this it will be seen of how much importance Addison, in his work of social reformation, held it to bring back order into the sphere of taste, and to set up a standard of literary judgment which, without breaking with the traditions of the past, might adapt itself, by the light of reason, to the changed requirements of modern society. In another paper he describes the method he means to pursue for the attainment of his object:—

I intend (he says, at the opening of his papers on False

[1] *Spectator*, No. 92.

Wit) to lay aside a whole week for this undertaking, that the scheme of my thoughts may not be broken or interrupted; and I dare promise myself, if my readers will give me a week's attention, that this great city will be very much changed for the better by next Saturday night. I shall endeavour to make what I say intelligible to ordinary capacities; but if my readers meet with any paper that in some parts of it may be a little out of their reach, I would not have them discouraged, for they may assure themselves that the next shall be much clearer. As the great and only end of these my speculations is to banish vice and ignorance out of the territories of Great Britain, I shall endeavour as much as possible to establish among us a taste of polite writing.[1]

What then was the standard of polite writing which Addison had in view? It is often said that, after the Restoration, England naturalised French principles of art and criticism, but this is a statement that to some extent misrepresents the facts of the case. Had England done this she would have submitted to the "Rules," derived from Castelvetro's interpretation of the *Poetics* of Aristotle, which, after being approved in many of the Italian Academies, had crossed the Alps into France. where they had, with certain modifications, acquired despotic dominion over French taste. Nor had England altogether rejected them. Pope exaggerates greatly when he says:—

> We bold Britons foreign laws despised,
> And lived unconquered and uncivilised.

Who can justly assert that the nation which had produced *The Faery Queen*, *Hamlet*, and *Paradise Lost* was "uncivilised"? The "Rules" had indeed been known in England since Castelvetro's book was first accepted as an authority; they were favoured by Sidney, Ben Jonson, and a considerable section of polite society; but they had never harmonised with the popular genius, and even when French models were encouraged by the taste of Charles II., they had failed to establish a paramount authority at the English Court.

[1] *Spectator*, No. 58.

In that reign Dryden was justly regarded as the leading critic in the country. Dryden admired the logical French genius, and he always speaks with respect of the critical opinions of Boileau, Le Bossu, and Bouhours. But being a thorough Englishman, he knew that, if he was to direct the taste of his countrymen, it would be idle for him to appeal to any absolute system of authority, even though it might be supposed to emanate from Aristotle himself. In all his criticism he trusts to the force of free reason, communicating between his own mind and the intelligence of a public audience, fortified, *ex hypothesi*, by sound reading; and this he regards as the final court of appeal.

To this conscious dialectical practice we owe those numerous Essays and Prefaces, scattered throughout Dryden's works, which form the real starting-point of English criticism. The critical principles he applies have something in common with the methods of the Italian and French critics, springing, as they evidently do, out of the habit of social discussion about time-honoured questions of art and taste. But the society which gave birth to criticism in Italy and France was the Academy; in England it was the Coffee-house. Dryden's Prefaces have, all of them, beneath the surface, a parliamentary air; they are the product of active debate in real life, being in this respect the natural counterpart of the critical Inductions, so frequently employed by Ben Jonson in the theatre to combat the prejudices of the spectators. They are also essentially the work of occasion. Some owe their being to innovations on the stage, others to political crises, others again to the enterprise of booksellers; but all imply the existence of a society divided between rival parties, resolved to question, to enquire, to dispute; to give and take blows from opposite sides; an atmosphere, in fact, such as that which prevailed in Will's Coffee-house in the stormy era of the Restoration and the Revolution. The leading feature of Italian criticism, as represented by Scaliger, and of French criticism, as represented by Boileau, is Absolute Authority; the main

characteristic of English criticism, as represented by Dryden, is Constitutional Liberty.

Up to a certain point Addison, in his critical method, proceeded along the same lines as Dryden; the best criticism of each of them implies the presence of a critical audience. But Addison's papers of this kind in *The Spectator* have nothing in them "occasional," nothing of that charm of careless egotism which characterises the Prefaces of Dryden, when he speaks with the conscious authority of a man of genius about matters which he knows to be generally interesting. The essayist feels that, through his newspaper, he is addressing a far wider audience than would listen to a literary discourse in any single coffee-house, or indeed would be likely to buy a particular book. Men of business, as well as of pleasure, weigh his opinions; women in large numbers are among his readers; it is his business rather to persuade and conciliate their understandings, than to treat them as if they were his scholars. Hence there is very much less of dialectic in Addison's criticism than in Dryden's, but much more of illustration; and, generally speaking, it may be said that the farther the former moves away from his practical end and his particular instances, in the direction of abstract reasoning, the less valuable do his judgments become. The real interest of his papers on Wit lies in the fact that they are meant as an argument against the school of Cowley, which still maintained some of its prestige in society. The essays on *Paradise Lost* are not intended to be an illustration of the supposed Aristotelian Rules; Aristotle's methods and divisions are used, because they furnish a convenient framework for introducing to the great body of English readers the qualities of a poem hitherto unknown to most of them. On the other hand, in the series of papers on the Pleasures of the Imagination, which are abstract and general, the reasoning is feeble, fragmentary, and superficial. The meaning of the word "Imagination" is almost exclusively restricted by Addison to the power of reproducing isolated images, originally derived from the sense of sight, and the illustrations

are accordingly mainly drawn from passages of description in poetry. There is nothing in the eleven papers of which the series is composed to show that the writer ever thought of expressing, by the term "Imagination," the power of conceiving organic life in the ideal world of which Shakespeare was conscious when he wrote:—

> The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
> Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;
> And as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name

Addison's excellence lies—as was to be expected from his genius—in applied criticism. He had a complete understanding of Horace's maxim, "Scribendi recte sapere est et principium et fons," which is not very far removed from Boileau's

> Quelque sujet qu'on traite, ou plaisant ou sublime,
> Que toujours le bon sens s'accorde avec la rime;

and his keen sense of humour made him relish all kinds of social absurdity that spring most obviously out of the neglect of this principle. Hence extravagance and affectation were particularly offensive to him, and he showed an inimitable skill in exposing incongruity by the grave irony of his illustrations. One of the happiest of this kind of sally may be cited from his first paper on "False Wit":—

This fashion of false wit [*i.e.* poems formed in the shape of external objects] was revived by several poets of the last age; and in particular may be met with in Mr. Herbert's poems, and, if I am not mistaken, in the translation of Du Bartas I do not remember any other kind of work among the moderns which more resembles the performances I have mentioned than that famous picture of King Charles the First, which has the whole Book of Psalms written in the lines of the face and the hair of the beard. When I was last at Oxford I perused one of the whiskers, and was reading the other, but could not go so far in it as I wou'd have done, by reason of the impatience of my friends and fellow travellers, who all of them pressed to see such a piece of curiosity. I have since heard that there is now an eminent

writing master in town who has transcribed all the Old Testament in a full-bottomed periwig; and if the fashion should introduce the thick kind of wigs which were in vogue some few years ago, he promises to add two or three supernumerary locks that should contain all the Apocrypha. He designed this wig originally for King William, having disposed the two Books of Kings in the two forks of the fore-top; but that glorious monarch dying before the wig was finished, there is a space left in it for the face of any one that has a mind to purchase it.[1]

Not less effective is his illustration of the maxim, "No thought is beautiful which is not just; and no thought can be just which is not founded in truth, or at least in that which passes for such." This principle he applies to the ridiculous use of Greek mythology for the purposes of modern compliment, and proceeds as follows:—

In order to put a stop to this absurd practice I shall publish the following edict by virtue of that spectatorial authority with which I stand invested:

Whereas the time of a general peace is, in all appearance, drawing near, being informed that there are several ingenious persons who intend to show their talents on so happy an occasion; and being willing, as much as in me lies, to prevent that effusion of nonsense which we have good cause to apprehend; I do hereby strictly require every person who shall write on this subject to remember that he is a Christian, and not to sacrifice his catechism to his poetry. In order to it I do expect of him, in the first place, to make his own poem, without depending on Phœbus for any part of it, or calling out for aid upon any one of the Muses by name. I do likewise positively forbid the sending of Mercury with any particular message or despatch relating to the peace, and shall by no means suffer Minerva to take upon her the shape of any plenipotentiary concerned in this great work. I do further declare, that I shall not allow the Destinies to have had a hand in the several thousands who have been slain in the late war, being of opinion that all such deaths may be very well accounted for by the Christian system of powder and ball. I do therefore strictly forbid the Fates to cut the thread of man's life upon any pretence whatsoever, unless it be for the sake of the rhyme. And whereas I have good reason to fear that Neptune will have a great deal of business on his hands, in several poems which we may

[1] *Spectator*, No. 58.

now suppose are on the anvil, I do also prohibit his appearance, unless it be done in metaphor, simile, or very short allusion: and that even here he be not permitted to enter but with great caution and circumspection. I desire that the same rule may be extended to the whole fraternity of heathen gods, it being my design to condemn every poem to the flames in which Jupiter thunders, or exercises any other act of authority which does not belong to him; in short I expect that no pagan agent shall be introduced, or any fact related, which a man cannot give credit to with a good conscience. Provided always that nothing herein contained shall extend, or be construed to extend, to several of the female poets in this nation, who shall be still left in possession of their gods and goddesses, in the same manner as if this paper had never been written.[1]

How completely antagonistic the spirit here manifested is to the spirit of the late Classical Renaissance, as it exhibits itself in the work of the Italian decadence, and even, to some extent, in the *Art Poétique* of Boileau, may be gathered from what I have said on the subject in the first chapter of this volume. And yet, if the true spirit of the Renaissance be identical with the spirit of civic freedom, no more genuinely classical application of critical principles can be found than in this humorous decree.

The writer who had done more than any other to establish these new standards of manners and taste, having attained to some of the highest offices in the State, died, in the fulness of manhood, on the 17th of June 1719, and was buried in Westminster Abbey. The occasion was commemorated in an Elegy by his friend Tickell, written with a classic elegance, in itself the highest tribute to the success that had attended the efforts of Addison in his work of social refinement:—

Can I forget the dismal night that gave
My soul's best part for ever to the grave?
How silent did his old companions tread
By midnight lamps, the mansions of the dead,
Through breathing statues, then unheeded things,
Through rows of warriors, and through walks of kings!

[1] *Spectator*, No. 523.

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> Through breathing statues, then unheeded things,
> Through rows of warriors, and through walks of kings!

[1] *Spectator*, No 523.

What awe did the slow, solemn knell inspire,
The pealing organ and the pausing choir!
The duties by the lawn-robed prelate paid,
And the last words that dust to dust conveyed!
While speechless o'er thy closing grave we bend,
Accept these tears, thou dear departed friend;
O, gone for ever! take this last adieu,
And sleep in peace, next thy loved Montague!

absorbed all the functions of Government; in England, when the struggle between Crown and Parliament was ended by the settlement of 1688.

But in the resulting character of each language there is striking dissimilarity, which is readily traceable to the predominant influence exercised on French society by the Crown and by Female Genius. As the kings of France had mounted to Absolutism by the support of the bourgeoisie, so they naturally encouraged a course of refinement proceeding from the old French poems, in which there was a large infusion of the popular spirit. But they also fully appreciated the great results which had been effected, in the improvement of manners, by the female leaders of the Hôtel Rambouillet, the social descendants of the Presidents of the *Cours d'Amour*; hence the polite French of the seventeenth century represents a mixture of the delicacy of Voiture, on the one side, and of the logical robustness of La Fontaine, Molière, and Boileau, on the other; these contrary qualities being reconciled with each other by the supreme authority of the Court.

No controlling influences of this kind operated in the formation of English taste, though it is easy to see that in English society the same elemental principles were at work. For a brief moment after the Restoration the great Royalist reaction placed the Crown in an almost absolute position; and in an earlier chapter of this History I have endeavoured to trace the effects on taste of the riotous and clumsy caricature of French manners in the Court of Charles II.[1] But these effects were not permanent, and, at the downfall of the Feudal Monarchy, there was nothing in the constitution of English society answering to the influence on language of the Hôtel Rambouillet or the later salons of the Précieuses.

On the whole, three forms of poetical diction had asserted themselves in England as just modes for determining the character of the Illustrious Vulgar Tongue. The first was Spenser's principle of archaic revival which, in the form of Allegory, commended itself to such conserva-

[1] Vol. iii. chap. xv. pp. 455-457.

tive intellects as strove to retain at least the image of chivalry and scholastic theology. But this clearly was not conformable to the ordinary usages of English speech, and still less so was the second form, viz. the Metaphysical manner, exemplified in the style of Donne and Cowley, which, springing out of the decay of the Scholastic Logic, carried imagination away from the sphere of common sense. Both of these fashions, being founded too exclusively on conscious literary experiment, showed a tendency to rapid exhaustion. It was not so with the third form, namely Waller's adaptation of the heroic couplet to the purposes of courtly compliment.

This metre had its foundation partly in the conversation of society, partly in the tradition of literature. It had been used with excellent effect by Chaucer, who imported it from France, and it had received a new development from Drayton, whose practice, improved by Drummond and Sir John Beaumont, was afterwards taken up by Waller, and used, as a vehicle of panegyric, in opposition to the Pindaric style of Cowley. Waller, however, was essentially a poet of the Court. He aimed at paying compliments in verse, smooth, lucid, and melodious; and to this end he imported into his poetry as much as possible of colloquial usage. But he shrank from the appearance of vulgarity, and, while discarding metaphysics, strove to give elevation to the subjects of his praise by associating them with a childish Pagan mythology. Hence his style was far from being adapted to the requirements of a society in which the Court played a diminished part. We have only to examine the verse of any representative courtier under the two last Stuarts, to see how it differs in tone from the easy well-bred manner attained in the aristocratic *régime* by poets like Prior and Cowper.

In order to form a refined poetical idiom, answering to the needs of civil society after the Revolution, it was necessary that the courtly style of Waller should receive a strong mixture of the popular speech, just in the same way as Addison had "brought philosophy out of closets

and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and in coffee-houses." The ex-Courtier, the man of affairs, and the Coffee-house philosopher, had in fact to do in England the refining work that the King, the Hôtel Rambouillet, and the Academy, had together done in France.

The process was a long and gradual one, for it was not easy to blend tendencies which were naturally opposed to each other. Still the feat was achieved, and the course of the movement may best be traced by making a starting-point from two early apostles of "correctness," whose names happen to be joined together in a well-known couplet of Pope—"Granville the polite, and knowing Walsh."[1] Though there is not much in the verses of these men to make the world eager to know more of them than is contained in this familiar quotation, they have enough character to render them deserving of the notice of the historian.

George Granville was indeed, in point of personal character, a man entitled to esteem and respect. He came of an ancient and loyal family, which had suffered much in the Civil War on the side of the King. His grandfather, Sir Bevile Granville or Grenville, one of the best generals in the royal army, fell in the moment of victory at the battle of Lansdown. John Granville, Sir Bevile's eldest son, afterwards created Earl of Bath and Viscount Lansdown, was one of those first trusted by Monk in his negotiations with Charles II. Bernard, the second son of Sir Bevile, fought at the battle of Newbury, escaping from it, as his son George reminded him, to take part in the defence of Scilly. The poet was a younger son of Bernard, and was born in 1667. He must have been of precocious ability, for he was admitted at the age of ten to Trinity College, Cambridge, and in the same year wrote a copy of congratulatory Latin verses on the marriage of the Prince of Orange with the Princess Mary

[1] Granville, the polite,
And knowing Walsh would tell me I could write.
Epistle to Arbuthnot, 135-136

of York. In 1679, when he was only twelve years old, he presented a copy of his verses to the Princess Mary of Modena, who had recently been married to the Duke of York; and in the following year he graduated as M.A. On the landing of the Prince of Orange, he earnestly begged his father to be allowed to prove his hereditary loyalty by taking the field on the side of King James. After the accession of William III. and Mary, Granville lived for years in retirement, amusing himself by occasionally writing for the stage, but when Anne came to the throne, his fortune having been increased by the deaths of his father and his uncle, the Earl of Bath, he entered Parliament as member for Fowey in Cornwall. He continued to sit in Parliament for Lostwithiel, Helston, and finally for the county of Cornwall. On the death of his elder brother Sir Bevile, he succeeded to the baronetcy and the family estates, and when Walpole was dismissed from the Secretaryship of War in 1710, Granville was appointed to succeed him—a fact at which he glances in his lines written on a window of a room in the Tower, where Walpole had been imprisoned, and whither he himself was sent in 1715, after the accession of George I., while Walpole returned to office:—

> Good unexpected, evil unforeseen,
> Appear by turns, as Fortune shifts the scene.
> Some, raised aloft, come tumbling down amain,
> And fall so hard they bound and rise again.

In 1711 he was raised to the House of Lords—among the twelve peers created to secure the final downfall of Marlborough—with the title of Baron Lansdown: in the following year he was appointed Comptroller, and in 1713 Treasurer of the Household. When James II. left the kingdom, Granville had not hesitated to proclaim his allegiance to him; after the succession of the House of Brunswick, the boldness with which he protested against the Bill attainting Ormonde and Bolingbroke of high treason so irritated the victorious Whigs that, as already mentioned, he was sent to the Tower,

where he remained till 1717. On his release he spoke, with all his old frankness and audacity, against the repeal of the Bill to prevent Occasional Conformity; but after 1721, seeing that the Stuart cause was hopeless, and perhaps being embarrassed in his private affairs, he retired to the Continent, and did not return to England till 1732. Finding that during his absence many of his poems had been published in an imperfect form, he issued in that year a corrected copy of his works, and presented them, with verses on the blank leaves, to the Queen—who had received him graciously at Court—and to the Princess Anne. He died at his house in Hanover Square on the 30th January 1735 (four days after the death of his wife), and was buried at St. Clement Danes.

With a character so vivacious and energetic, it might have been expected that Granville would attain simplicity of poetic expression. As a matter of fact he never did so. He had indeed a right intuition as to the necessary drift of taste, and recognised the justice of Mulgrave's and Roscommon's standard of criticism in his *Essay on Unnatural Flights in Poetry*:—

Our King returned, and banished peace restored,
The Muse ran mad to see her exiled lord;
On the cracked stage the bedlam heroes roared,
And scarce could speak one reasonable word.
Dryden himself, to please a frantic age,
Was forced to let his judgment stoop to rage.
To a wild audience he conformed his voice,
Complied to custom, but not erred by choice.
Deem then the people's, not the writer's sin,
Almansor's rage and rants of Maximin;
That fury spent, in each elaborate piece
He vies for fame with ancient Rome and Greece.

But as in politics Granville obeyed without reservation, so in poetry he admired without judgment. He adored James II. as the incarnation of Hereditary Royalty; he imitated Waller as an infallible model of correct taste; and his lines "To the Immortal Memory" of that poet may be taken as the measure alike of his political and critical sagacity:—

Our British Kings are raised above the hearse,
Immortal made in his immortal verse.
No more are Mars and Jove poetic themes,
But the celestial Charleses and just James.
Juno and Pallas, all the shining race
Of heavenly beauties, to the queen give place;
Clear, like her brow, and graceful was his song;
Great, like her mind, and, like her virtue, strong

Parent of gods, who dost to gods remove,
Where art thou placed? and which thy seat above?
Waller the god of verse we will proclaim;
Not Phœbus now, but Waller be his name;
Of joyful bands the sweet seraphic choir
Acknowledge thee their oracle and sire.
The spheres do homage, and the muses sing
Waller the god of verse, who was the king.

Granville apparently had no suspicion that these lines were as good a specimen as could be found of an "unnatural flight in poetry." He was blinded by his admiration for Waller, whom he strove to imitate, not only in his smooth idiomatic diction, but in his foolish mythology and insipid classicism. By adopting these silly conventions, on occasions which called for a manly directness of expression, Granville contrives to leave on the mind an impression of insincerity. A good example of this remains in the consolation he offers to James II. after his downfall:—

O happy James! content thy mighty mind;
Grudge not the world, for still thy Queen is kind;
To lie but at whose feet more glory brings,
Than 'tis to tread on empires and on kings.
Secure of empire in that beauteous breast,
Who would not give their crowns to be so blest?

It is said that Mary of Modena, praised in *The Progress of Beauty*, was originally the object of the poetical homage which Granville afterwards transferred to the Countess of Newburgh, under the fictitious name of Myra. Sacharissa is of course the model for the portrait of this divinity, who, to all the qualities of "Venus" and "Pallas," joins

the "cruelty" of Waller's heroine. The poet in one of his "lonely walks distracted by despair," meets with Apollo, who advises him to retaliate on his mistress, but to no purpose:—

In vain I try, in vain to vengeance move
My gentle Muse, so used to tender love.
Such magic rules my heart, whate'er I write
Turns all to soft complaint and amorous flight.
"Begone, fond thoughts, begone; be bold," said I;
"Satire's thy theme"—In vain again I try.
So charming Myra to each sense appears,
My soul adores, my rage dissolves in tears.

And yet Apollo's advice was certainly good; for, by some of the verse that Granville has left behind him, it is plain that he might have succeeded in that familiar style which is "fittest for discourse and nearest prose." Not only do his prologues and epilogues deserve the praise that Johnson bestows upon them, but his satirical epigrams, coarse as they are in texture, have unmistakable vigour. The sketches of Macro and Cocles (meaning perhaps Sunderland, or Godolphin, and Marlborough) in the "Lines on an Ill-favoured Lord"—are admirable:—

That Macro's looks are good let no man doubt:
Which I, his friend and servant, thus make out.
In every line of his perfidious face
The secret malice of his heart we trace.
So fair the warning, and so plainly writ;
Let none condemn the light that shows a pit.
Cocles, whose face finds credit for his heart,
Who can escape so smooth a villain's art?
Adorned with every grace that can persuade,
Seeing we trust, though sure to be betrayed.
His looks are snares: but Macro's cry, Beware!
Believe not, though ten thousand oaths he swear.
If thou'rt deceived, observing well this rule,
Not Macro is the knave, but thou the fool.
In this one point he and his looks agree;
As they betray their master—so did he.

We should not naturally associate the following malodorous epigram with "Granville the polite"; but it is thoroughly characteristic of the Caroline age, whose

manners inspired it; and for this reason, and as possessing a brutal pungency which it would be hard to match outside the epigrams of Martial, it deserves to be cited:—

> Believe me, Cloe, the perfumes that cost
> Such sums to sweeten thee are treasures lost.
> Not all Arabia would sufficient be:
> Thou smell'st not of thy sweets; they stink of thee.

William Walsh, the partner of Granville in Pope's panegyrical couplet, was his opponent in politics. He was the son of Joseph Walsh of Abberley in Worcestershire, and was born in 1673. Entering Wadham College, Oxford, in 1678, he left it without taking a degree, and appears to have entered early into courtly society, where, according to Dennis, he was noted for the splendour of his dress. On the 10th of August 1698 he was elected M.P. for Worcestershire, and when he began to correspond with Pope in 1705, he represented Richmond in Yorkshire. He was Gentleman of the Horse under the Duke of Somerset. A zealous partisan of the Whigs, he supported the war policy initiated by William III, and in his *Golden Age Restored* satirised the leaders of the Tory reaction of 1703; among others Granville, whom he apparently expected to be elected Speaker of the House of Commons.[1] On the other hand, when the Whigs recovered their ascendency, he imitated with some felicity (1705) Horace's Ode beginning *Justum et tenacem*:—

> The man that's resolute and just,
> Firm to his principles and trust,
> Nor hopes nor fears can blind;
> No passions his designs control,
> Not Love, that tyrant of the soul,
> Can shake his steady mind.
>
> No parties for revenge engaged,
> Nor threatening of a Court enraged,
> Nor storms where fleets despair;
> No thunder pointed at his head;
> The shattered world may strike him dead,
> Not touch his soul with fear.

[1] "Granville shall seize the long-expected chair."

From this the Grecian glory rose;
By this the Romans awed their foes;
Of this their poets sing;
These were the paths their heroes trod;
These arts made Hercules a god,
And great Nassau a king.

In the rest of the ode he goes on to prophesy the rich harvests the country will reap from a steady opposition to Louis XIV. He died in March 1707-8.

Walsh attained much more nearly than Granville to the idea of "simplicity" in style. Dryden, in the Postscript to the Æneis, speaks of him as the best critic in the nation: hence Pope, who says that he owed to him the counsel to aim at "correctness," with his usual trenchant felicity of description, calls him "*knowing* Walsh." This epithet indeed Walsh scarcely deserved when he advised Pope to write a pastoral play in imitation of Tasso's *Aminta*. He was in fact blinded to the natural movement towards simplification of taste by his appreciation of late Italian poetry, just as Granville was misled by his admiration of Kings, and of Waller, their courtly flatterer. Walsh knew little of the world outside the Court, and would doubtless have taken for his motto *Odi profanum vulgus*: still within the limited circle for which he wrote he aims at familiarity. The fastidiousness of his critical taste saved him from affectation. He had a natural turn for epigram; and though most of his poems are of the gallant character, which was supposed to be necessary for a man of fashion, he writes on love rather as a moralist than as a lover. Thus he gives an "Envoi" to his Book in the spirit of an epigrammatist:—

Go, little Book, and to the world impart,
The faithful image of an amorous heart.
Those who love's dear deluding pains have known
May in my fatal story read their own:
Those who have lived from all its torments free
May find the thing they never felt by me:
Perhaps, advised, avoid the gilded bait,
And, warned by my example, shun my fate;
While with calm joy, safe landed on the coast,
I view the waves on which I once was tost.

Love is a medley of endearments, jars,
Suspicions, quarrels, reconcilements, wars;
Then peace again. Oh! would it not be best
To chase the fatal poison from the breast?
But since so few can live from passion free,
Happy the man, and only happy he,

. . . .

What's built upon esteem can ne'er decay.

Walsh seems to have spoken from experience. Celinda, whom he celebrates, gave him, according to his own report, only a share of her heart, and he describes in his verse his fluctuations of feeling between his love for his mistress and his contempt for his rivals. In the following lines—one of the early examples of anapæstic verse in English poetry—there is an anticipation of the light touch of Prior:—

When I see the bright nymph who my heart doth enthral,
  When I view her soft eyes and her languishing air,
Her merit so great, my own merit so small,
  It makes me adore, and it makes me despair.

But when I consider she squanders on fools
  All those treasures of beauty with which she is stored,
My fancy it damps, my passion it cools,
  And it makes me despise what before I adored.

Thus sometimes I despair, and sometimes I despise,
  I love and I hate, but I never esteem:
The passion grows up when I view her bright eyes,
  Which my rivals destroy when I look upon them!

How wisely doth Nature things different unite!
  In such odd compositions our safety is found;
As the blood of a scorpion's a cure for the bite,
  So her folly makes whole whom her beauty doth wound.

Walsh imitates the classics without slavishly copying them. He rejects the puerile mythology, which Granville adopts from Waller, and, in attempting to naturalise the classical form of the Eclogue, he sometimes infuses into it a certain amount of modern colour. Thus, in his fourth Pastoral Eclogue, he makes two shepherds contend with

each other in alternate verse about the contrasted *dispositions* of their respective mistresses, after which Lycon, the judge, decides in the following moral strain :—

Shepherds, enough ; now cease your amorous war ;
Or too much heat may carry both too far ;
I well attended the dispute, and find
Both nymphs have charms, but each in different kind.
Flavia deserves more pains than she will cost,
As easily got, were she not easily lost.
Sylvia is much more difficult to gain,
But, once possessed, will well reward the pain.
We wish them Flavias all, when first we burn ;
But, once possessed, wish they would Sylvias turn.
And, by the different charms in each exprest,
One we should soonest love, the other best.

His most characteristic feature is epigrammatic neatness, a good example of which is furnished by a little poem called *Phyllis's Resolution* :—

When slaves their liberty require,
They hope no more to gain ;
But you not only that desire,
But ask the power to reign.

Think how unjust a suit you make,
Then you will soon decline ;
Your freedom, when you please, pray take,
But trespass not on mine.

No more in vain, Alcander, crave ;
I ne'er will grant the thing,
That he, who once has been my slave,
Should ever be my king.

But he now and then shows a mastery over a light rhythmical form of comic verse, for which it would be difficult to find a parallel in earlier English poetry Such is his *Despairing Lover* :—

Distracted with care
For Phyllis the fair,
Since nothing could move her,
Poor Damon, her lover,
Resolves in despair
No longer to languish,
Nor bear so much anguish ;

But, mad with his love,
To a precipice goes,
Where a leap from above
Would soon finish his woes.
When in rage he came there,
Beholding how steep
The sides did appear,
And the bottom how deep;
His torments projecting,
And sadly reflecting
That a lover forsaken
A new love may get,
But a neck when once broken
Can never be set;
And that he could die
Whenever he would,
But that he could live
But as long as he could:
How grievous soever
The torment might grow,
He scorned to endeavour
To finish it so:
But bold, unconcerned
At thoughts of the pain,
He calmly returned
To his cottage again.

The verses of Granville and Walsh give back many echoes of the Middle Ages, in the lingering notes of the Provençals, and in the pastoralism and mythology of the late Italian Renaissance. But new manners were at hand. In the last years of William III.'s reign a poem appeared which, both in its style and in the popularity it enjoyed through the whole of the eighteenth century, is a monument of the great change in the temper and taste of the nation wrought by the Revolution of 1688. "Perhaps," says Johnson, "no composition in our language has been oftener perused than Pomfret's *Choice*." When the *Lives of the Poets* were written this might have been true. First published in a separate form in 1700, this poem rapidly ran through four editions; in 1736 it had reached its tenth edition; and the last edition was published as late as 1790. But in the nineteenth century it gradually dropped out of memory, and since it is now never included

in our popular anthologies, the reader may be glad to have an opportunity of seeing it *in extenso*.

THE CHOICE

If Heaven the grateful liberty would give
That I might choose my method how to live;
And all those hours propitious fate should lend
In blissful ease and satisfaction spend;
Near some fair town I'd have a private seat,
Built uniform, not little, nor too great:
Better if on a rising ground it stood;
On this side fields, on that a neighbouring wood.
It should within no other things contain
But what are useful, necessary, plain:
Methinks 'tis nauseous, and I'd ne'er endure
The needless pomp of gaudy furniture.
A little garden, grateful to the eye,
And a cool rivulet run murmuring by;
On whose delicious banks a stately row
Of shady limes or sycamores should grow.
At th' end of which a silent study placed
Should be with all the noblest authors graced;
Horace and Virgil, in whose mighty lines
Immortal wit and solid learning shines;
Sharp Juvenal, and amorous Ovid too,
Who all the turns of love's soft passions knew:
He that with judgment reads his charming lines,
In which strong art with stronger nature joins,
Must grant his fancy does the best excel;
His thoughts so tender, and expressed so well:
With all those moderns, men of steady sense,
Esteemed for learning and for eloquence.
In some of these, as Fancy should advise,
I'd always take my morning exercise;
For sure no minutes bring us more content
Than those in pleasing, useful studies spent.
I'd have a clear and competent estate,
That I might live genteelly but not great.
As much as I could moderately spend;
A little more, sometimes t' oblige a friend.
Nor should the sons of Poverty repine
Too much at Fortune; they should taste of mine;
And all that objects of true pity were
Should be relieved with what my wants could spare;
For that our Maker has too largely given
Should be returned in gratitude to Heaven.
A frugal plenty should my table spread,
With healthy, not luxurious dishes fed:

Enough to satisfy, and something more,
To feed the stranger and the neighbouring poor.
Strong meat indulges vice, and pampering food
Creates diseases, and inflames the blood.
But what's sufficient to make nature strong,
And the bright lamp of life continue long,
I'd freely take; and as I did possess,
The bounteous Author of my plenty bless.
I'd have a little vault, but always stored
With the best wines each vintage could afford.
Wine whets the wit, improves its native force,
And gives a pleasant flavour to discourse;
By making all our spirits debonair,
Throws off the lees, the sediment of care.
But as the greatest blessing Heaven lends
May be debauched, and serve ignoble ends;
So, but too oft, the grape's refreshing juice
Does many mischievous effects produce.
My house should no such rude disorders know,
As from high drinking consequently flow;

Used with respect, and not uneasy be
In my retreat, or to himself or me.
What freedom, prudence, and right reason give,
All men may with impunity receive;
But the least swerving from their rule's too much;
For what's forbidden us 'tis death to touch.
That life may be more comfortable yet,
And all my joys refined, sincere, and great;
I'd choose two friends, whose company would be
A great advance to my felicity:
Well-born, of humours suited to my own,
Discreet, that men as well as books have known:
Brave, generous, witty, and exactly free
From loose behaviour, or formality.
Airy and prudent, merry but not light;
Quick in discerning and in judging right:
Secret they should be, faithful to their trust;

By solid reason, and let that decide:
Not prone to lust, revenge, or envious hate;
Nor busy meddlers with intrigues of state
Strangers to slander, and sworn foes to spite,
Not quarrelsome, but stout enough to fight;

Loyal and pious, friends to Cæsar; true
As dying martyrs to their Maker too.
In their society I could not miss
A permanent, sincere, substantial bliss.
 Would bounteous Heaven once more indulge, I'd choose
(For who would so much satisfaction lose
As witty nymphs in conversation give?)
Near some obliging, modest fair to live:
For there's that sweetness in a female mind
Which in a man's we cannot hope to find;
That, by a secret but a powerful art,
Winds up the spring of life, and does impart
Fresh vital heat to the transported heart.
 I'd have her reason all her passion sway,
Easy in company, in private gay:
Coy to a fop, to the deserving free;
Still constant to herself, and just to me.
A soul she should have for great actions fit;
Prudence and wisdom to direct her wit:
Courage to look bold danger in the face;
No fear but only to be proud or base;
Quick to advise, by an emergence prest,
To give good counsel, or to take the best.
I'd have the expression of her thoughts be such
She might not seem reserved, nor talk too much:
That shows a want of judgment and of sense:
More than enough is but impertinence.
Her conduct regular, her mirth refined,
Civil to strangers, to her neighbours kind:
Averse to vanity, revenge, and pride,
In all the methods of deceit untried:
So faithful to her friend and good to all,
No censure might upon her actions fall.
Then would ev'n Envy be compelled to say,
She goes the least of womankind astray.
 To this fair creature I'd sometimes retire;
Her conversation would new joys inspire,
Give life an edge so keen, no surly care
Would venture to assault my soul, or dare
Near my retreat to hide one secret snare:
But so divine, so noble a repast
I'd seldom, and with moderation, taste:
For highest cordials all their virtue lose
By a too frequent and too bold a use;
And what would cheer the spirits in distress
Ruins our health when taken to excess.
 I'd be concerned in no litigious jar;
Beloved by all, not vainly popular.
Whate'er assistance I had power to bring,

T'oblige my country, or to serve my King,
Whene'er they call, I'd readily afford,
My tongue, my pen, my counsel, or my sword.
Lawsuits I'd shun, with as much studious care
As I would dens where hungry lions are;
And rather put up injuries, than be
A plague to him who'd be a plague to me.
I value quiet at a price too great
To give for my revenge so dear a rate:
For what do we by all our bustle gain,
But counterfeit delight for real pain?
    If Heaven a date of many years would give,
Thus I'd in pleasure, ease, and plenty live.
And as I near approached the verge of life,
Some kind relation (for I'd have no wife)
Should take upon him all my worldly care,
Whilst I did for a better state prepare.
Then I'd not be with any trouble vexed,
Nor have the evening of my days perplexed;
But, by a silent and a peaceful death,
Without a sigh, resign my aged breath.
And, when committed to the dust, I'd have
Few tears, but friendly, dropt into my grave:
Then would my exit so propitious be,
All men would wish to live and die like me.

John Pomfret, the author of this charming poem, was the son of Thomas Pomfret, Vicar of Luton, in which place John was born in 1667. He was educated first at Bedford, and afterwards at Queens' College, Cambridge, where he graduated B A in 1684 and M A. in 1698. He was among the numerous poets who wrote odes on Queen Mary's death in 1694, and in 1699 he published a volume of poems, in the preface to which he modestly said that he should judge from the reception of the book whether it was worth printing or not. It was probably received with some favour, but *The Choice* was not included in it, and was issued separately in 1700. Pomfret, who had been appointed to the Rectory of Malden in Bedfordshire in 1695, perhaps in reward for his loyal celebration of the late Queen's virtues, might fairly have hoped that the fame of *The Choice* would have brought him further preferment. It is evident, however, from what he says in his poem, that he had not realised the truth of Hamlet's

warning to Ophelia: "Be thou as chaste as ice and as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny." It is said that representations were made in his behalf to Compton, Bishop of London, but that the latter was scandalised by the reference in *The Choice* to the "fair creature" and the resolution to have "no wife"; so that, though in this respect the poet had already changed his mind and was married, he was never moved from Malden, where he died and was buried, 1st December 1702.

Nothing could have been more innocent than Pomfret's poem. When it first appeared it was without the author's name, and announced itself to be the work of "A Person of Quality." And indeed it might have proceeded from any quarter in the ranks of intellectual society, for, as Johnson says, it exhibited "a system of life adapted to common notions, and equal to common expectations, such a state as affords plenty and tranquillity, without exclusion of intellectual pleasures." To no society that ever existed would an ideal like this have offered more attractions than to the England of the early eighteenth century. Sixty years of civil war, or factious conflict, had distracted the mind of the nation, and, like the country-loving Romans after the battle of Actium, all classes welcomed the prospect of settled government. Only a few years before the publication of *The Choice*, moderate men had felt their duty divided between allegiance to their Sovereign and attachment to their National Church;

> Loyal and pious, friends to Cæsar; true
> As dying martyrs to their Maker too.

With Falkland many had sighed for "Peace"; with Cowley others dreamed of a retirement that should

> Pleasures yield
> Horace might envy in his Sabine field;

men such as "humble Allen," "the Man of Ross," and a multitude who "did good by stealth and blushed to find it fame," longed for a state of quiet in which they might

indulge their benevolent instincts undisturbed by civil broils.

To the hearts of all such readers the sentiment of Pomfret's poem appealed directly. Equally felicitous was the form in which the sentiment was conveyed. *The Choice* is the first poem in the English language written in the conversational style of Horace's *Satires* and *Epistles*. Just as the Roman poet had breathed a prayer for "a piece of land not over large, with a garden, a clear spring of water near the house, and beyond it a strip of wood,"[1] so Pomfret's English idea was to have

> A little garden grateful to the eye,
> And a cool rivulet run murmuring by,
> On whose delicious banks a stately row
> Of shady limes or sycamores should grow.

Horace's praises of the golden mean; his invitation to Mæcenas to come and drink his well-stored Sabine *vin ordinaire* in moderate cups; and his contrast of the sweet country quiet with the bloated ostentation of Roman "smart society," all find their counterparts in Pomfret's hospitable cellar, his enjoyment of the conversation of his male friends, and his horror of litigation as the enemy of "quiet,"

> (For what do we by all our bustle gain
> But counterfeit delight for real pain?);

and these echoes of Latin sentiment are admirably reproduced in his treatment of the heroic couplet. No English poet had yet caught so much of Horace's easy epistolary style in this metre. He never repeated his success. His other poems are written in facile and agreeable verse; but the best of them—his *Epistles* and *Vision*—are spoiled by an air of sham pastoralism. Pope, however, who could always discover the excellences of minor poets, studied him carefully, and has done him the honour of appropriating one of the lines in his *Vision* for *Eloisa to Abelard*.[2]

The Choice, then, embodied a new ideal of simplicity

[1] Horace, *Satires*, ii. vi.

[2] "Which breeds such sad variety of woe." Compare *Eloisa to Abelard*, 36.

in life, thought, and language for Englishmen at large, and more especially for the dwellers in the country. But the Revolution settlement exercised indirectly a still more potent influence on the imagination by its effects on the inhabitants of the town, and especially on the men of poetic genius whom the exigencies of the time involved in State employments. Brought into immediate touch with the chief orators and statesmen of the day, forced to study all the arts of expression adapted to convince or persuade the public, and ever observant of the drift of social taste, it was inevitable that such writers should discard the comparatively abstract ideals of style hitherto cultivated, and should attempt to mould metrical forms more and more to suit the bent of their own characters and the idioms of polite conversation. The various results of this tendency are visible in the verse of the remarkable triumvirate who must now come under our notice, Prior, Swift, and Gay.

Matthew Prior, of whom as a panegyrical poet I have already said something, was born at Wimborne Minster in Dorsetshire on the 21st of July 1664; his father, according to the local tradition, being a carpenter. While he was a boy his father moved to London, and Matthew was sent to school at Westminster. Soon afterwards the elder Prior died, and his son was left to the charge of an uncle who was a vintner in Channel (Cannon) Row, Westminster, and who took the boy away from school to help him in his wine-house. Here he was one day found by Lord Dorset reading Horace. The Earl, struck with his intelligence, persuaded his uncle to let him return to Westminster, and helped to pay for his schooling until his election as King's Scholar. From Westminster Prior passed to St. John's College, Cambridge, choosing a scholarship in that College rather than at Christ Church, Oxford, because he wished to be at the same University with his school-fellow, James Montague, younger brother of Charles, afterwards Lord Halifax, who was also a fellow-student with Prior both at Westminster and Cambridge. Prior took his B.A. degree in 1686, and in the

following year joined Charles Montague in writing the parody on Dryden's *Hind and Panther.* Though Montague was naturally the first to obtain preferment, as a reward for this service, Prior's turn soon came He was appointed in 1690 Secretary to Lord Dursley (afterwards Earl of Berkeley), William III.'s Ambassador to the Hague; and in that capacity was often brought into communication with the King.

It was during this period of his life that most of his panegyrical poems, specimens of which I have given in an earlier chapter, were written. But as his Epistle to Fleetwood Sheppard shows, he had already begun to cultivate the familiar style, and his parody on Boileau's Ode in 1695, as well as *The Secretary,* written at the Hague in 1696, must have revealed where his real strength lay. Nevertheless during William's reign there was little opportunity for him to follow his bent. "I had enough to do," he says of himself, "in studying French and Dutch and altering my Terentian and original style into articles and conventions." In 1697 he acted as Secretary, first during the negotiations for the Treaty of Ryswick, and in the following year to the Embassy of Lord Portland to Paris respecting the Partition Treaty, to which he alludes in his *Conversation.* In 1699 he wrote his official *Carmen Seculare,* for which variety of service he was rewarded in 1700 with the Commissionership of Trade and Plantations just vacated by John Locke. He was elected M.P. for East Grinstead in 1701, and in Anne's reign gradually detached himself from the Whigs to act with Harley and St. John. His wide knowledge of official business caused him in 1711 to be employed in the arrangement of preliminaries to the Treaty of Utrecht, and in 1712 he was sent as Ambassador to Paris for the completion of the Treaty. On his return to England in 1715 he was impeached, and was sent to the Tower for two years, during which he wrote his *Alma.*

His numerous employments in affairs of State had not enriched him, and when released from confinement, having no means of subsistence beyond the Fellowship at

St. John's to which he had been elected in 1688, he printed in 1719 a volume of his poems by subscription, which brought him 4000 guineas. In addition to this, his friend Lord Harley bought for him the little estate of Down Hall, which Prior describes in the lively ballad with that title, and on which he spent the short remainder of his life. He died on the 18th of September 1721.[1]

To appreciate fully the character of Prior's familiar style, we ought also to consider the serious side of his genius. He was, as he describes himself in an ante-dated epitaph, essentially a two-sided man:—

> Yet counting as far as to fifty his years,
> His virtue and vice were as other men's are;
> High hopes he conceived, and he smothered great fears,
> In life party-coloured, half pleasure, half care.
>
> Nor to business a drudge, nor to faction a slave,
> He strove to make interest and freedom agree;
> In public employments industrious and grave,
> And alone with his friends, lord, how merry was he!

In the same way he could think and write gravely as well as wittily, and (as often happens with men) believed his grave inspirations to be his best: "What do you tell me of my *Alma*?" said he to Pope, who had preferred that poem to *Solomon*, "a loose and hasty scribble to relieve the tedious hours of my imprisonment while in the messenger's hands." The world has never been persuaded to think as well of *Solomon* as the author did; but any reader who studies the poem with attention will see that Prior valued it because it was written from his heart. It is the work of a man who has seen much of the world, and has that much right to judge it from Solomon's point of view. The following lines on the vanity of science, so called, put into the mouth of the Hebrew King, reflect the Pyrrhonism of the seventeenth century in England:—

[1] A fuller account of Prior's life will be found in the *Selected Poems of Matthew Prior*, by Mr. Austin Dobson, who has performed the parts of Editor and Biographer with all the refinement, thoroughness, and sympathy, to be expected from a kindred spirit.

Forced by reflective reason, I confess
That human science is uncertain guess
Alas! we grasp the clouds and beat the air,
Vexing that spirit we intend to clear.
Can thought beyond the bounds of matter climb
Or who shall tell me what is space or time?
In vain we lift up our presumptuous eyes
To what our Maker to their ken denies:
The searcher follows fast; the object faster flies.
The little which imperfectly we find
Seduces only the bewildered mind
To fruitless search of something left behind.
Various discussions tear our heated brain;
Opinions often turn, still doubts remain;
And who indulges thought increases pain.

The same serious moral note often recurs in Prior's lighter and more familiar verse. Writing to Charles Montague, he says:—

Our hopes, like towering falcons, aim
  At objects in an airy height:
The little pleasure of the game
  Is from afar to view the flight.

Our anxious pains we all the day
  In search of what we like employ:
Scorning at night the worthless prey,
  We find the labour gave the joy.

At distance through an artful glass
  To the mind's eye things will appear:
They lose their forms, and make a mass
  Confused and black, if brought too near.

If we see right we see our woes;
  Then what avails it to have eyes?
From ignorance our comfort flows;
  The only wretched are the wise.

We wearied should lie down in death;
  This cheat of life too soon would fade;
If you thought fame an empty breath,
  I Phyllis but a perjured jade.

Prior's mirth, therefore, has in it a strong vein of melancholy, but his philosophical conclusion is to find cheerfulness in action; a moral which he may even have

commended to himself by the more solemn aspiration with which he closes his *Solomon* :—

Now, Solomon, remembering who thou art,
Act through thy remnant life the decent part.
Go forth : be strong : with patience and with care
Perform, and suffer : to thyself severe,
Gracious to others, thy desires suppressed,
Diffused thy virtues : first of men, be best.
Thy sum of duty let two words contain,
(O may they graven in thy heart remain !)
Be humble and be just.

. . . . . .

Supreme, all wise, eternal Potentate !
Sole Author, sole Dispenser of our fate !
Enshrined in light and immortality,
Whom no man fully sees, and none can see !
Original of beings ! Power Divine !
Since that I live and that I think is thine !
Benign Creator ! let thy plastic hand
Dispose its own effect ; let thy command
Restore, great Father, thy instructed son ;
And in my act let Thy great will be done.

Reading these lines, evidently written with emotion, we seem to feel the sincerity of the simple and pious verses to Lady Margaret Cavendish Holles Harley in her childhood :—

My noble, lovely, little Peggy,
Let this, my first epistle, beg ye,
At dawn of morn and close of even,
To lift your heart and hands to Heaven.

In double beauty say your prayer :
Our Father first, then *Notre Père* :
And, dearest child, along the day
In everything you do and say,
Obey and please my lord and lady,
So God shall love, and angels aid ye.

If to these precepts you attend,
No Second-Letter need I send,
And so I rest your constant friend.

But though, for the purpose of discovering the true character of his poetical genius, it is certainly necessary to study his serious as well as his lighter verse, injustice is

done him by subjecting his poetry to solemn canons of criticism, whether applied for the purpose of blame or praise. An example of the former kind of injustice remains in Johnson's judgment on *Henry and Emma*:—

> The greatest of all his amorous essays is *Henry and Emma*, a dull and tedious dialogue which excites neither esteem for the man nor tenderness for the woman. The example of Emma, who resolves to follow an outlawed murderer wherever fear and guilt shall drive him, deserves no imitation; and the experiment by which Henry tries the lady's constancy is such as must end either in infamy to her, or in disappointment to himself.[1]

Here it is evident that Johnson is judging by a moral and not by a poetical law. But Cowper, in defending Prior on poetical grounds, does not greatly improve the cause of his client. He says of Johnson's criticism:—

> But what shall we say of his old, fusty, rusty remarks upon Henry and Emma? I agree with him that, morally considered, both the knight and his lady are bad characters, and that each exhibits an example which ought not to be followed. The man dissembles in a way that would have justified the woman had she renounced him; and the woman resolves to follow him at the expense of delicacy, propriety, and even modesty itself. But when the critic calls it a dull dialogue, who but a critic will believe him? There are few readers of poetry, of either sex, in the country who cannot remember how that enchanting piece has bewitched them—who do not know that, instead of finding it tedious, they have been so delighted with the romantic turn of it as to have overlooked all its defects, and to have given it a consecrated place in their memories without ever feeling it a burden.[2]

As Spenser says, "Thoughts of men do as themselves decay." While probably almost all modern readers will agree with Johnson's low estimate of *Henry and Emma* rather than with Cowper's, they will certainly dissent from the grounds of the former's judgment. Prior's error was one not so much of morals as of taste. Fancying that he could improve the ballad of *The Nut-brown Maid*, he endeavoured to rationalise and, as he thought, to harmonise one of the most artlessly beautiful and melodious

[1] *Lives of the Poets: Prior.*

[2] Letter to Unwin, January 5, 1782

poems in the English language, by tacking a narrative on to the dialogue, and translating the latter into the rhetorical diction appropriate to the heroic couplet. The old author of the ballad had no object of the kind that Johnson and Cowper imagine: his purpose, as he shows us, was simply to defend women against the charge of *being fickle in their affections, and this he does in the* directest way by a kind of "Tenson," after the Provençal manner. The reader may judge of the desecration of the original in Prior's version by comparing a question and answer in the ancient and modern form.

(THE NUT-BROWN MAID)

A

Nay, nay, not so; ye shall not go, and I shall tell you why:
Your appetyght is to be lyght of love, I well espy;
For lyke as ye have sayed to me, in lykewyse hardely
Ye would answère, whosoever it were, in way of company.
It is sayd of old—"Sone hote, sone cold"; and so is a womàn.
For I must to the grene wode go, alone, a banyshed man.

B

Yf ye take hede, it is no nede such wordes to say by me;
For oft ye prayed and long assayed, or I you loved pardè:
And though that I of ancestry a baron's daughter be,
Yet have ye proved how I you loved, a squyer of lowe degre,
And ever shall, whatso befall; to dy therefore anone;
For in my mynde of all mankynde I love but you alone.

(PRIOR) HENRY

O wildest thoughts of an abandoned mind!
Name, habits, parents, woman, left behind,
Ev'n honour dubious, thou prefer'st to go
Wild to the woods with me!—Said Emma so?
Or did I dream what Emma never said?
O guilty error! and O wretched maid!
Whose roving fancy would resolve the same
With him who next should tempt her easy fame;
And blow with empty words the susceptible flame:
Now why should doubtful terms thy mind perplex?
Confess thy frailty, and avow thy sex.
No longer loose desire for constant love
Mistake: but say 'tis man with whom thou long'st to rove.

EMMA

Are there not poisons, racks, and flames, and swords,
That Emma thus must die by Henry's words?
Yet what can swords, or poisons, racks, or flame,
But mangle and disjoint the brittle frame?
More fatal Henry's words: they mangle Emma's fame.
  And fall these sayings from that gentle tongue,
Where civil speech and soft persuasion hung;
Whose artful sweetness and harmonious strain,
Courting my grace, yet courting it in vain,
Called sighs, and tears, and wishes to its aid;
And whilst it Henry's glowing love conveyed,
Still blamed the coldness of the Nut-brown Maid?
  Let envious jealousy, and cankered spite,
Produce my actions to severest light,
And tax my open day or secret night.
Did e'er my tongue speak my unguarded heart
The least inclined to play the wanton's part?
Did e'er my eye one inward thought reveal,
Which angels might not hear and angels tell?
And hast thou, Henry, in my conduct known
One fault, but that which I must never own,
That I of all mankind have loved but thee alone.

When Johnson, fixing his attention exclusively on this and other serious poems of Prior, goes on to criticise the latter's diction, his remarks inevitably raise a smile.—

His diction is more his own than that of any among the successors of Dryden; he borrows no lucky turns or commodious modes of language from his predecessors. His phrases are original, but they are sometimes harsh; as he inherited no elegances, none has he bequeathed. His expression has every mark of laborious study: the line seldom seems to have been formed at once; the words did not come till they were called, and were then put by constraint into their places, where they do their duty, but do it sullenly.[1]

On this Cowper remarks with perfect justice and great felicity:—

By your leave, most learned Doctor, this is the most disingenuous remark I ever met with, and would have come with a better grace from Curll or Dennis. Every man conversant

[1] *Lives of the Poets: Prior*

with verse writing knows, and knows by painful experience, that the familiar style is of all styles the most difficult to succeed in. To make verse speak the language of prose without being prosaic —to marshal the words of it in such an order as they might naturally take in falling from the lips of an extemporary speaker, yet without seeming to displace a syllable for the sake of rhyme —is one of the most arduous tasks a poet can undertake. He that could accomplish this task was Prior; many have imitated his excellence in this particular, but the best copies have fallen far short of the original.[1]

The true estimate of Prior's genius seems to lie between the depreciation of Johnson and the appreciation of Cowper. Johnson, with a keen eye to the defects of Prior's serious style, and thinking especially of those in *Solomon*, exaggerated them, after his manner, by his trenchant epigrams, without regard to the poet's more characteristic excellences. Cowper, admiring warmly Prior's achievements in familiar verse, tried to persuade himself that the same qualities were to be found in his more elaborate compositions, such as *Henry and Emma*. Johnson observes of Prior's love poems :—

Venus, after the example of the Greek epigram, asks when she was seen *naked and bathing*. Then Cupid is *mistaken*; then Cupid is *disarmed*; then he loses his darts to Ganymede; then Jupiter sends him a summons by Mercury. Then Chloe goes a-hunting with an *ivory quiver graceful by her side*; Diana mistakes her for one of her nymphs, and Cupid laughs at the blunder. All this is surely despicable.[2]

It scarcely seems a sufficient reply to say, with Cowper, that there "there is a fashion in such things";[3] for it is the aim of all true and permanent art to overcome fashion. Prior wrote, as an English poet, when the formal classical tide was running at its strongest throughout Europe, and he is sometimes at the mercy of the fashion. In his panegyrical verse, modelled on Cowley's pseudo-Pindaric manner, there is that straining after effect to which Johnson alludes. His Alexandrian epigrams on Chloe are often as puerile as the mythology

[1] Letter to Unwin, January 17, 1782. [2] *Lives of the Poets: Prior.*
[3] Letter to Unwin, January 5, 1782.

of Chiabrera in Italy, of Voiture in France, of Waller in England; his *Henry and Emma* makes a futile attempt to apply the external classical style to what is in its essence romantic, just as Pope's *Messiah* seeks to Hellenise ideas that are in spirit Hebraic. But it is unjust to judge Prior mainly by these comparative failures. Wherever he has thoroughly imbibed and assimilated the classical spirit, and has adapted it to his own civic surroundings, there—that is to say, in all his most characteristic poems—his poetic triumph is complete. He is a master in the art of blending the grave and gay, the humorous and pathetic, as may be best seen perhaps in his verses, *To a Child of Quality, Five Years Old, the Author supposed Forty*:—

Lords, knights, and 'squires, the numerous band
  That wear the fair Miss Mary's fetters,
Were summoned by her high command
  To show their passions by their letters.

My pen among the rest I took,
  Lest those bright eyes, that cannot read,
Should dart their kindling fires, and look
  The power they have to be obeyed.

Nor quality, nor reputation,
  Forbid me yet my flame to tell;
Dear five-years-old befriends my passion,
  And I may write till she can spell

For while she makes her silk-worms' beds
  With all the tender things I swear,
Whilst all the house my passion reads
  In papers round her baby hair;

She may receive and own my flame,
  For, though the strictest prudes should know it,
She'll pass for a most virtuous dame,
  And I for an unhappy poet.

Then too, alas! when she shall tear
  The lines some younger rival sends,
She'll give me leave to write, I fear,
  And we shall still continue friends.

For as our different ages move,
  'Tis so ordained (would Fate but mend it!)
That I shall be past making love,
  When she begins to comprehend it.

The mellowed philosophy of life, in which Horace shows his sympathy with human infirmities, pervades Prior's poems of humorous reflection, a good specimen of which is the epigram *Written in the beginning of Mezeray's History of France*:—

Whate'er thy countrymen have done
By law and wit, by sword and gun,
  In thee is faithfully recited:
And all the living world, that view
Thy work, give thee the praises due,
  At once instructed and delighted.

Yet for the fame of all these deeds,
What beggar in the *Invalids*,
  With lameness broke, with blindness smitten,
Wished ever decently to die,
To have been either Mezeray,
  Or any monarch he has written?

It strange, dear author, yet it true is,
That, down from Pharamond to Louis,
  All covet life, yet call it pain;
All feel the ill, yet shun the cure;
Can sense this paradox endure?
  Resolve me Cambray or Fontaine.

The man in graver tragic known
(Though his best part long since was done)
  Still on the stage desires to tarry:
And he who played the Harlequin
After the jest still loads the scene,
  Unwilling to retire, though weary.

Not less charming, in a different style, is the description, with its touches of melancholy, of the travellers recalling old memories at an inn, in the ballad of *Down Hall* (the farm that Lord Harley presented to Prior):—

Into an old inn did this equipage roll
At a town they call Hodson, the sign of the Bull,
Near a nymph with an urn, that divides the highway,
And into a puddle throws mother of tea.

Come here, my sweet landlady, pray how d'ye do?
Where is Cicely so cleanly, and Prudence, and Sue?
And where is the widow that dwelt here below?
And the ostler that sung about eight years ago?

And where is your sister, so mild and so dear,
Whose voice to her maids like a trumpet was clear?
By my troth! she replies, you grow younger, I think:
And pray, Sir, what wine does the gentleman drink?

Why now let me die, Sir, or live upon trust,
If I know to which question to answer you first:
Why things since I saw you, most strangely have varied,
The ostler is hanged, and the widow is married.

And Prue left a child for the parish to nurse;
And Cicely went off with a gentleman's purse;
And as to my sister, so mild and so dear,
She has lain in the churchyard full many a year.

In poems like these we reach the high-water mark of the familiar style in English poetry. There is, however, scarcely less merit in the more strictly conversational form of octosyllabic verse which Prior employs for the reproduction of the Horatian manner. His longest poem in this kind is *Alma,* a humorous dialogue between himself and his friend Richard Shelton, the purpose of which is apparently to put forward, in a vein of gaiety, the Pyrrhonist opinions about science that he had expressed more seriously in *Solomon.* The conclusion as to the vanity of human pursuits is certainly the same in both poems:—

Dick, thus we act; and thus we are,
Or tossed by hope, or sunk by care.
With endless pain this man pursues
What, if he gained, he could not use;
And t'other fondly hopes to see
What never was, nor e'er shall be.
We err by use, go wrong by rules,
In gesture grave, in action fools:
We join hypocrisy to pride,
Doubling the faults we strive to hide.
Or grant that with extreme surprise
We find ourselves at sixty wise;
And twenty pretty things are known,
Of which we can't accomplish one;
Whilst, as my system says, the mind
Is to these upper rooms confined:
Should I, my friend, at large repeat
Her borrowed sense, her fond conceit,
The bead roll of her vicious tricks;
My poems will be too prolix;

For could I my remarks sustain,
Like Socrates, or Miles Montaigne,
Who in these times would read my books
But Tom o' Stiles or John o' Nokes ?

It is characteristic of the author that Dick is made to wind up the poem with a sneer at Matthew's own system :—

Sir, if it be your wisdom's aim
To make me merrier than I am,
I'll be all night at your devotion—
Come on, friend ; broach the pleasing notion :
But if you would depress my thought,
Your system is not worth a groat—

For Plato's fancies what care I ?
I hope you would not have me die,
Like simple Cato in the play,
For anything that he can say ?
Ev'n let him of ideas speak
To heathens in his native Greek.

If to be sad is to be wise,
I do most heartily despise
Whatever Socrates has said,
Or Tully writ, or Wanley read.

Dear Drift, to set the matter right,
Remove these papers from my sight ;
Burn Matt's Descartes, and Aristotle.
Here ! Jonathan, your master's bottle.

I do not understand why Cowper should have questioned Johnson's statement that *Alma* is an imitation of *Hudibras*.[1] Not only is the form of the dialogue obviously modelled on the philosophical discussions between Hudibras and Ralpho, but Prior himself, at the beginning of Canto ii., declares that he is the "mimic of his master's dance." When, on the other hand, Johnson says that the imitation lacks the "bullion" of that master, the criticism seems to be irrelevant ; for it was not Prior's object to reproduce the encyclopædic erudition of Butler, but rather to adapt the easy flow of his predecessor's octosyllabic verse to his own familiar, but polished, vein of Horatian discourse. Perhaps the most successful

[1] Letter to Unwin, March 21, 1784.

example of the Hudibrastic-Horatian style in Prior is *The Conversation*, in which the poet is represented listening to the portraiture of his own character by one who, without ever having seen him, professes to know him well; and the preservation by Mr. Dobson of this piece among his selections from the poet more than compensates the loss of the less decent *Tales*, in which the latter has sought to reproduce the manner of La Fontaine. Whatever Prior touched in the light style became golden; and the gay good-humour of the experienced, disenchanted, man of affairs makes the reader feel how great must have been the charm of his company, which, according to the report of the Duchess of Portland—"noble, lovely, little Peggy"—caused him to be "beloved by every living thing in the house, master, child, and servant, human creature or animal."[1]

To analyse the familiar style of Prior's great contemporary, Swift, is a matter of far more difficulty. Of this Johnson says:—

> In his other works is found an equable tenour of easy language which rather trickles than flows. His delight was simplicity. That he has in his works no metaphor, as has been said, is not true; but his few metaphors seem rather to be received by necessity than choice. He studied purity; and though perhaps all his strictures are not exact, yet it is not often that solecisms can be found: and whoever depends on his authority may generally conclude himself safe. His sentences are never too much dilated or contracted; and it will not be easy to find any embarrassment in the complication of his clauses any inconsequence in his connections, or abruptness in his transitions. His style was well suited to his thoughts, which are never subtilised by nice disquisitions, decorated by sparkling conceits, elevated by ambitious sentences, or variegated by far-sought learning. He pays no court to the passions; he excites neither surprise nor admiration; he always understands himself, and his reader always understands him; the peruser of Swift wants little previous knowledge; it will be sufficient that he is acquainted with common words and common things: he is neither required to mount elevations nor to explore profundities; his passage is always on a level, along solid ground, without asperities,

[1] *Works of Lady M. W. Montague* (Lord Wharncliffe), vol. i. p. 63.

without obstruction. This easy and safe conveyance of meaning it was Swift's desire to attain, and for having attained he deserves praise. For purposes merely didactic, when something is to be told that was not known before, it is the best mode; but against that inattention by which known truths are suffered to lie neglected, it makes no provision; it instructs but does not persuade.[1]

The description which Johnson here gives of the simplicity of Swift's style is accurate; but his purely negative account of the reasons for this simplicity seems astonishingly inadequate. It overlooks the fact that almost all Swift's most characteristic compositions in prose are not instructive but destructive; it ignores the *saeva indignatio* by which so much of his work is inspired; it takes no notice of what is his most effective weapon, his irony. No man ever equalled Swift in the skill with which he could ridicule an argument, by giving an air of the most precise logic to an opponent's premises, and at the same time making them lead to an obviously absurd conclusion. Only a prejudice against the man could have made Johnson think that he had estimated the Dean's genius aright, in saying that his chief object in sentences like the following was "the easy and safe conveyance of meaning":—

It is objected that, by freethinking, men will think themselves into atheism; and indeed I have allowed all along that atheistical books convert men to freethinking. But suppose it to be true, I can bring you two divines, who affirm superstition and enthusiasm to be worse than atheism, and more mischievous to society: and in short it is necessary that the bulk of the people should be atheists or superstitious.—*Mr. Collins' Discourse of Freethinking.*

And to urge another argument of a parallel nature: if Christianity were once abolished, how could the freethinkers, the strong reasoners, and the men of profound learning, be able to find another subject, so calculated in all points, whereon to display their abilities? What wonderful productions of wit should we be deprived of, from those whose genius by continual practice has been wholly turned upon raillery and invectives

[1] *Lives of the Poets: Swift.*

against religion, and would therefore never be able to shine or distinguish themselves upon any other subject! We are daily complaining of the great decline of wit among us, and would we take away the greatest, perhaps the only topic we have left? Who would have suspected Asgil for a wit, or Toland for a philosopher, if the inexhaustible stock of Christianity had not been at hand to provide them with materials? What other subject, through all art or nature, could have produced Tindal for a profound author, or furnished him with readers? It is the wise choice of the subject that alone adorns and distinguishes the writer. For had a hundred such pens as these been employed on the side of religion, they would immediately have sunk into silence and oblivion.—*Argument against Abolishing Christianity.*

I take it for granted that you intend to pursue the beaten track, and are already desirous to be seen in a pulpit: only I hope you will think it proper to pass your quarantine among some of the desolate churches five miles round this town, where you may at least learn to read and to speak, before you venture to expose your parts in a city congregation: not that these are better judges, but because, if a man must needs expose his folly, it is more safe and discreet to do so before few witnesses, and in a scattered neighbourhood.—*Letter to a Young Clergyman.*

Of the irony and the *saeva indignatio*, which are the main intellectual elements in the genius of Swift, there seem to be four ingredients: (1) the Pyrrhonism, common to so many eminent writers in the seventeenth century, and already noted in the genius of Prior: it is evident that Swift might have prefixed to the lines on his own death the motto which Prior attached to *Alma*:—

πάντα γέλως, καὶ πάντα κόνις, καὶ πάντα τὸ μηδέν·
πάντα γὰρ ἐξ ἀλόγων ἐστὶ τὰ γιγνόμενα·

(2) a practical sense and capacity for business, essentially English, and curiously characteristic of many men inclining to pessimism: in this too he resembles Prior; (3) a deep sense of the importance of religion in the conduct of life, and a reverence for his own consecrated office, which caused him to detest the race of shallow freethinkers, who made Christianity the object of wit and ridicule; (4) self-esteem and disappointment. These four contrary influences, blending together inspired the imagination of Swift in various

manners, according to the circumstances in which he found himself placed. His life extended over six reigns, and the four last of these mark off his literary work into characteristic sections.

Jonathan Swift was the second child of Jonathan Swift, son of Thomas Swift, vicar of Goderich, near Ross in Herefordshire. His father migrated to Dublin, where Jonathan the younger was born posthumously on the 30th of November 1667. He was educated at Trinity College, Dublin, and there took his degree *speciali gratia* in 1685. In 1688, the year of the Revolution, Swift came to England, and by the advice of his mother, then living in Leicester, sought the protection of her kinsman, Sir William Temple, who made him his secretary. In the house of the latter at Sheen, and afterwards at Moor Park, he had an opportunity for large and various study: he was also brought into frequent political communication with William III., an experience which, he tells us, "helped to cure him of vanity." Here he wrote his earliest poems, which, it is interesting to observe are like Prior's, of the panegyrical order, and are composed after the manner of Cowley. In the ode addressed to the Athenian Society there are lines specially deserving of notice, since they mark how strong and early were the stirrings of ambition in the mind of their remarkable author:—

> Were I to form a regular thought of Fame,
> Which is perhaps as hard to imagine right,
> As to paint Echo to the sight,
> I would not draw the idea from an empty name;
> Because alas! when we all die
> Careless and ignorant posterity,
> Although they praise the learning and the wit,
> And though the title seem to show
> The name and man by whom the book was writ,
> Yet how shall they be brought to know
> Whether that very name was he, or you, or I?

It is perhaps not wonderful that when this bald unmusical composition, or one of the other odes written at Moor Park, was shown to Dryden, he should have said: "Cousin Swift, you will never be a poet." But in the

stern and intellectual sincerity of the thought, reminding us of Donne, there was enough to prove the power of the writer; and the unqualified denial of poetic inspiration, to one who must already have been conscious of superior talents, explains the enduring resentment against Dryden which Swift manifested on so many occasions, and notably in his *Tale of a Tub.* Nevertheless the old poet's plainness of speech probably helped to divert his kinsman's genius into its right channel: it is at any rate very suggestive to find, six years later, the simple aspiration after Fame, breathed in the *Ode to the Athenian Society*, changed into bitter irony in the "Epistle Dedicatory to His Royal Highness, Prince Posterity," prefixed to the *Tale of a Tub*.[1]

Meantime the long series of disappointments, of which Swift's life may be almost said to consist, had begun. Offered first, by William III., a captaincy of Dragoons, and afterwards, by Sir William Temple, a subordinate post in the ex-diplomatist's sinecure office at Dublin, he finally resolved to take orders, and was ordained deacon on the 25th of October 1694. The next year he was presented to the small living of Kilroot, near Belfast, which he resigned, after holding it for a year, and returned to Sir William Temple, at Moor Park, in 1696. Here, about 1697, he took part in the war between Bentley and the Christ Church wits, by writing *The Battle of the Books*, where he has first discovered, in the delightful episode of the Spider and the Bee, that unequalled power of allegorical irony by means of which he contrives, through mean and lowly objects, to satirise the pride of human nature.

In 1699 Sir William Temple died, leaving Swift his literary executor, who hoped, by dedicating his patron's works to the King, to obtain from the latter the fulfilment of an old promise that he should have the first prebend that became vacant at Westminster or Canterbury. But William forgot his promises, and Swift was forced to accept the offer made him by Lord Berkeley, lately

[1] From the paragraph beginning: "It is not unlikely that when your Highness will one day peruse what I am now writing," etc., he lets us see, in the epistle dedicatory, that it was written in August 1697.

appointed one of the Lords Justices of Ireland, of accompanying him as his private secretary. Even of the advantages of this post he was deprived by the intrigues of a certain Bush, who persuaded the Lord Justice that the duties could only be properly performed by a layman, and so obtained the office for himself. Swift was therefore obliged to remain in Lord Berkeley's household as chaplain. The ill-treatment he had received had not yet destroyed the gaiety of his humour, and though he vented his spleen in several contemptuous copies of verse on Lord Berkeley, *Mrs. Harris's Petition*—the style of which is apparently suggested by *Gammer Gurton's Needle*—shows the delight he took at that period in imitating the inconsequent ramblings of uneducated minds.

Next year he had to put up with fresh disappointments, first in failing to obtain the deanery of Derry, which had become vacant and was in the gift of Lord Berkeley, and next in being obliged to content himself with the two small livings of Laracor and Rathbeggan in Meath. Here he continued punctually to discharge his duties as parish priest: at the same time, the constant claims of his clerical office tended to alienate him from the Whigs, with whom he had hitherto acted in politics, but whom he now saw to be drifting into an alliance with the Dissenters and Latitudinarian Freethinkers, and into an antagonism to the plain interests of the Established Church. His gradual detachment from the Whigs is disclosed in his *Sentiments of a Church-of-England Man*, his pamphlet *Against Abolishing Christianity*, and his defence of the Sacramental Test, all published in 1708. In 1710, having been entrusted by Archbishop King with an embassy to England, on behalf of some rights claimed by the Irish Church, he formed a firm alliance with the Tories, under the leadership of Harley and St. John, and, by his pamphlets and personal influence, became by degrees the most powerful instrument in shaping the conduct of his new party.

The political biography of Swift during these years does not fall within the scope of this History, except in

so far as it illustrates his poetry; but it is of importance to note that his humour during the years 1708-14 is in its happiest vein, whether of prose or verse. Then were produced the *Argument against Abolishing Christianity*; the *Discourse on Freethinking*; the various papers against Partridge; and such poems as *Baucis and Philemon*, the *City Shower*; the various imitations of Horace in octosyllabic verse; and *Cadenus and Vanessa*. Doubtless the sense of his extraordinary influence with the nation, and the consciousness that all his intellectual faculties were working harmoniously towards definite aims, mitigated the *saeva indignatio* which lacerated his heart in later years, when he was a forced exile from the English political world, and when his disappointment could find vent only in bitter vilification of the men in power.

A new phase in his literary life begins with the reign of George I. Appointed Dean of St. Patrick's, Dublin, in 1713, he settled himself in Ireland after the death of Queen Anne, and for some ten years the verse that he produced was written, almost entirely, in a tone of domestic familiarity, and consisted for the most part of birthday addresses to "Stella" (Esther Johnson, to whom he was probably privately married in 1716), and ludicrous Epistles to Dr. Sheridan and Dr. Delany, his two most intimate friends. His attacks of giddiness became frequent, and his deafness increased, but, judging by his poetry, he does not seem to have been unhappy; and, though his contempt for human nature in the mass embodies itself in his *South Sea Project* (1721), his kindly feeling for "John, Peter, and Thomas," as individuals, is reflected in *Mary the Cook-maid's Letter*, written in the Gammer-Gurton style of *Mrs. Harris's Petition*.

In 1723, however, his feelings were exposed to a severe shock. In that year died Esther Vanhomrigh, whom he had eulogised in 1713 as Vanessa. As his pupil she had excited his admiration, but she desired his love; and in time the torment of her feelings induced her to write to Stella, enquiring as to the truth of the report about her marriage with Swift. This led to an irreparable

breach between Miss Vanhomrigh and the Dean; and when the former died she left instructions that *Cadenus and Vanessa* should be published. Delany says: "The Dean made a tour to the south of Ireland, for about two months, at this time, to dissipate his thoughts and give place to obloquy." It was probably a relief to him to have the opportunity, in the following year, of once more entering the political arena, when the introduction of Wood's halfpence into Ireland gave occasion for the issue of the famous *Drapier's Letters.* But his private sorrows increased. In 1726 Stella became seriously ill, and it is evident, from the tone of Swift's verses to her, on her birthday in that year, that he was attempting to put away from his imagination the possibility of losing her. His letter concludes:—

O then, whatever Heaven intends,
Take pity on your pitying friends!
Nor let your ills affect your mind,
To fancy they can be unkind.
Me, surely me, you ought to spare,
Who gladly would your suffering share;
Or give my scrap of life to you,
And think it far beneath your due;
You, to whose care so oft I owe
That I'm alive to tell you so.

This was the last birthday letter Stella received from the Dean. She died on 28th January 1728. Swift, who had just been astonishing the world with *Gulliver's Travels,* had been in England for some months in 1727, as the guest of Pope, and having kissed the hands of George II. and Queen Caroline three days after their accession, was looking forward to the renewal of Court favour, and a possible return from his Irish exile. The tidings of Stella's hopeless condition were a stunning blow to him. Fresh attacks of giddiness seized him; he left Pope's house abruptly, and hastened back to Ireland, where he arrived about two months before Stella's death. From this time onward almost all his verse seems to reflect the deepening gloom which was settling on his spirit. His attacks on Walpole, now Prime Minister, grew more virulent; his

reflections on the Queen, whom he accused of breaking her promises to him, more severe; he refused to receive his old acquaintance at his table, and complained at the same time, in his lines *On the Death of Dr. Swift*, that he had no friends left to care for him. As late as 1736 he was able to compose; but in that year, being seized with a severe fit of giddiness while writing *The Legion Club*, he gave over all attempts to think regularly, and sinking into a state of semi-imbecility, in the midst of which he exhibited a few transient gleams of reason, he died in October 1745.[1]

Great injustice is done to the genius of Swift, if we consider it in its singularity, and without reference to the character of his age. "Whatever he did," says Johnson, "he seemed willing to do in a manner peculiar to himself, without sufficiently considering that singularity, as it implies a contempt of the general practice, is a kind of defiance which justly provokes the hostility of ridicule; he, therefore, who indulges peculiar habits is worse than others, if he be not better." In the same spirit Johnson comments on Swift's propensity to "predominate over his companions"; a censure which is to some extent confirmed by Lord Orrery, who says, "He assumed more the air of patron than a friend: he affected rather to dictate than advise";[2] and by Young, who told Spence that "Swift had a mixture of insolence in his conversation."[3] The defect, for such it undoubtedly was, grew upon him with his years; but, in judging it, allowance should be made for the unbroken series of disappointments which contributed to distort Swift's whole view of life, and which would have caused him to assert himself against a man like Orrery, eminent by the mere accident of birth, and perhaps to treat with undisguised contempt one who owed his success, as, in his opinion, Young did, to the arts of flattery. There was no affectation of singularity in Swift's intercourse with Addison, while Fortune seemed to smile on his genius; there is no approach to

[1] Swift's history can be best followed in the excellent *Life* by Sir Henry Craik (1894) [2] *Remarks* (1753), p. 29. [3] *Anecdotes*, p. 334.

"insolence" in his correspondence with Bolingbroke, Pope, and Gay—men whom in some departments of action he was ready to recognise as his intellectual equals, or even as his superiors. Nor, again, could he have exercised so unrivalled an influence on the course of public opinion, if he had sought in his political pamphlets to sway the minds of his readers by arguments of mere eccentricity.

The "singularity" of Swift's thought and style was, in fact, justified by the superiority of his understanding. Beyond all his contemporaries, even including Prior, Swift was penetrated with the philosophical scepticism arising out of the conflict between the Scholastic Philosophy and the New Learning, which we have seen operating so often and so powerfully on men of imagination through the seventeenth century. Beyond them all he understood the nature of the political change which the Revolution had wrought, in shifting the centre of sovereignty from the Crown to the People. But just because he had an unrivalled insight into the frail nature of the popular opinion, on which the Government now rested, he was moved by a passionate desire to maintain the established Constitution in Church and State, which he saw to be the sole safeguard for the preservation of what he valued above all things, Liberty. Hence, Pyrrhonist though he was, his hatred for the race of Freethinkers and small wits, who sought to bring themselves into notice by dialectical attacks on orthodox Christianity; hence, too, his ever-growing dislike of the Whigs, who were ready to sacrifice all constitutional safeguards to the promotion of their party interests.

Swift's irony, in which so much of the "singularity" of manner noticed by Johnson consists, ought therefore to be considered apart from the *saeva indignatio* which inspires all the utterances of his later years. He felt that safety lay in "the common sense of most," within the limits of the Constitution, provided that the people were enabled to judge fairly of social facts. "God," says he, "has given the bulk of mankind a capacity to understand

reason when it is fairly offered; and by reason they would easily be governed if it were left to their choice."[1] But he saw that, unfortunately, in all party leaders there was an inevitable tendency to mislead; in some, as in Harley, because they had a belief in the efficacy of petty intrigue rather than of reason; in others, such as the more unscrupulous Whig leaders, because they understood the power of lies in politics. Swift's own political creed was strongly founded in principle, from which he never departed. As regards his opposition to Absolutism, he was from the first, and remained, a Whig;[2] but from his perception of the necessity of maintaining, as a national institution, the doctrine and discipline of the Church, he was drawn to act with the Tories. The meannesses and subterfuges of both parties, being ever before his eyes, constantly intensified his contempt for human nature; hence the edge of his irony—which seemed to him the most fitting weapon to use in a scene so full of knavery and folly—sometimes glanced from its real object and wounded things that he truly valued and revered.

Though irony was clearly the right artistic instrument to be wielded by one who, like Swift, based his view of life on philosophic scepticism, his intellectual position by no means justified the frame of mind suggested by the phrase *saeva indignatio*. Johnson seems to lay his finger on the weak point in Swift's philosophy, when he points out that it did not exclude self-deception:—

> He [Swift] predominated (he says) over his companions with very high ascendancy, and probably would bear none over whom he could not predominate. To give him advice was, in the style of his friend Delaney, "to venture to speak to him." This customary superiority soon grew too delicate for truth; and Swift with all his penetration allowed himself to be delighted with low flattery.[3]

If all man's conceptions of the external world were founded on uncertainty, and if human nature itself were the thing of unmitigated meanness, folly, and corruption

[1] *Thoughts upon the Present State of Affairs.*
[2] Letter of January 10, 1721, to Pope. [3] *Lives of the Poets: Swift.*

that Swift assumed, while at the same time counsels of despair were to be rejected, it surely behoved the Christian philosopher to recommend, with Pascal, the suppression of all personal pride, and to accept in humility the consolations of religion. In Swift, on the contrary, the indignation with mankind that lacerated his heart became savage in exact proportion to the disappointments and sufferings which he himself experienced. While he was able to exert his great powers in promoting the political cause in which he was interested, the world, in spite of his perception of its follies, seemed to him a tolerable place; in all his arguments, and in his verse, he treats his fellow-men on an equality; it was only when he was reduced to political impotence, and his imagination infected by disease, that mankind became Yahoos to him, and the whole movement of society, saving in the little circle which surrounded him, seemed

> A tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing.

The progress of this absorbing egotism is clearly reflected in the altering character of his verse.

Starting from 1708—about which period his poetical style begins definitely to form itself—we find his invention occupied with something as near creation as he ever attained in poetry. There is charming grace and pleasantry in his modernisation of the tale of Baucis and Philemon. Jupiter and Mercury are converted into travelling saints, and Philemon's metamorphosis from a husbandman into a parish priest—perhaps not altogether unlike the neighbours of the Vicar of Laracor—is thus described:—

> The cottage by such feats as these
> Grown to a church by just degrees
> The hermits then desired their host
> To ask for what he fancied most.
> Philemon, having paused awhile,
> Returned them thanks in homely style:
> Then said, "My house is grown so fine,
> Methinks, I still would call it mine;

I'm old, and fain would live at ease;
Make me the parson, if you please."
He spoke, and presently he feels
His grazier's coat fall down his heels:
He sees, yet hardly can believe,
About each arm a pudding sleeve;
His waistcoat to a cassock grew,
And both assumed a sable hue;
But, being old, continued just
As threadbare and as full of dust.
His talk was now of tithes and dues;
He smoked his pipe and read the news;
Knew how to preach old sermons next,
Vamped in the preface and the text;
At christenings well could act his part,
And had the service all by heart;
[illegible]

. . . . .

Found his head filled with many a system;
But classic authors—he ne'er missed 'em.

In 1710, when he was in London and just beginning to perceive—as his *Journal to Stella* shows—how great was his influence with politicians, he is infinitely diverted by the humours of the town, and records his impressions of *A City Shower* in mock-heroic verse:—

Now in contiguous drops the flood comes down,
Threatening with deluge this devoted town,
To shops in crowds the daggled females fly,
Pretend to cheapen goods, but nothing buy.
The templar spruce, while every spout's abroach,
Stays till 'tis fair, yet scorns to call a coach
The tucked-up seamstress walks with hasty strides,
While streams run down her oiled umbrella's sides
Here various kinds, by varied fortunes led,
Commence acquaintance underneath a shed.
Triumphant Tories and despondent Whigs
Forget their feuds, and join to save their wigs.
Boxed in a chair, the beau impatient sits,
While spouts run clattering o'er the roof by fits;
And ever and anon with frightful din
The leather sounds; he trembles from within.
So when Troy chairmen bore the wooden steed,
Pregnant with Greeks impatient to be freed,

(Those bully Greeks who, as the moderns do,
Instead of paying chairmen, run them through)
Laocoon struck the outside with a spear,
And each imprisoned hero quaked with fear.

His appointment to the Deanery of St. Patrick's in 1713, though, as taking him away from England, it was in itself a disappointment, was far from spoiling the gaiety of his humour, as may be seen from his truly admirable imitation of Horace's *Epistle* describing how the Consul Philippus amused himself with an unsophisticated Roman. Philippus is converted into Harley, and Swift's description of himself at this period is full of *bonhomie*:—

Lewis his patron's humour knows,
Away upon his errand goes,
And quickly did the matter sift;
Found out that it was Doctor Swift,
A clergyman of special note
For shunning those of his own coat;
Which made his brethren of the gown
Take care betimes to run him down;
No libertine; not over-nice;
Addicted to no kind of vice;
Went where he pleased, said what he thought;
Not rich, but owed no man a groat:
In state opinions *à la mode*;
He hated Wharton like a toad,
Had given the *faction* many a wound,
And libelled all the *junto* round;
Kept company with men of wit,
Who oft-times fathered what he writ:
His works were hawked in every street,
But seldom rose above a sheet:
Of late indeed the paper stamp
Did very much his genius cramp;
And since he could not spend his fire,
He now intended to retire.[1]

Whatever may have been the exact truth with regard to the influence that Swift exercised over Vanessa, there can be no question as to the fineness and delicacy of the compliment paid to that unfortunate woman in the poem,

[1] *Imitation of Horace*, Book i. Epistle 7.

which, it is to be remembered, was in 1713 meant for her eye alone. No more extraordinary contrast can be imagined than the difference in style between this composition and the lines *On a Lady's Dressing Room*, with which in later years Swift condescended to disgrace his pen:—

Cadenus, common forms apart,
In every scene had kept his heart;
Had sighed and languished, vowed and writ,
For pastime, or to show his wit.
But books, and time, and state affairs
Had spoiled his fashionable airs:
He now could praise, esteem, approve,
But understood not what was love.
His conduct might have made him styled
A father, and the nymph his child.
That innocent delight he took,
To see the virgin mind her book,
Was but the master's secret joy
In school to hear the finest boy.[1]

In 1714 we note the first symptoms of a change. He is now in what he considers banishment. Sickness grows upon him, and with exile and ill-health the long-suppressed egotism begins to make itself heard:—

'Tis true—then why should I repine
To see my life so fast decline?
But why obscurely here alone,
Where I am neither loved nor known?
My state of health none care to learn:
My life is here no soul's concern:
And those with whom I here converse
Without a tear will tend my hearse,
Removed from kind Arbuthnot's aid,
Who knows his art but not his trade,
Preferring his regard for me
Before his credit or his fee.
Some formal visits, looks, and words,
What mere humanity affords,
I meet perhaps from three or four,
From whom I once expected more:
Which those who tend the sick for pay
Can act as decently as they;

[1] *Cadenus and Vanessa.*

But no obliging tender friend
To help at my approaching end;
My life is now a burden grown
To others, ere it be my own.
Ye formal weepers for the sick,
In your last offices be quick;
And spare my absent friends the grief
To hear, yet give me no relief;
Expired to-day, entombed to-morrow,
When known, will save a double sorrow.[1]

But such lamentations are moderate compared to the bitterness of resentment concentrated in the verse written after the accession of George II. In this the momentary joy of battle, aroused by the conflict over Wood's Halfpence, has died out; the hopes excited by the compliments of Queen Caroline have been exchanged for the gloom of disappointment, while the gall projected outwards on courts and ministers in *Gulliver's Travels* is now poured into the lacerated heart of the man remembering old times, comparing them with present neglect, and brooding self-consciously over the indifference with which the tidings of his death will be received at their card-tables by those who call themselves his friends:—

My female friends, whose tender hearts
Have better learned to act their parts,
Receive the news in doleful dumps:
"The Dean is dead; (Pray, what is trumps?)
Then Lord have mercy on his soul!
(Ladies, I'll venture on the vole);
Six deans, they say, must bear the pall
(I wish I knew what king to call!).
Madam, your husband will attend
The funeral of so good a friend?"
"No, madam, 'tis a shocking sight,
And he's engaged to-morrow night:
My Lady Club will take it ill
If he should fail her at quadrille.
He loved the Dean (I lead a heart),
But dearest friends, they say, must part:
His time was come; he ran his race;
We hope he's in a better place.[2]

[1] *In Sickness*, October 1714.

[2] *Lines on His Own Death.*

Amidst this vision of hard hearts the image of his own ill-requited merits looms gigantic, and he draws a portrait of himself by the hand of one, as he supposes, "indifferent in the cause." It is in curious contrast with the humorous self-depreciation of his own character, as described to Lewis in the early imitation of Horace:—

He never thought an honour done him,
Because a peer was proud to own him;
Would rather slip aside, and choose
To talk with wits in dirty shoes;
And scorn the tools with stars and garters,
So often seen caressing Chartres.
He never courted men in station,
Nor persons held in admiration;
Of no man's greatness was afraid,
Because he sought for no man's aid.
Though trusted long in great affairs,
He gave himself no haughty airs:
Without regarding private ends,
Spent all his credit for his friends,
And only chose the wise and good;
No flatterers; no allies in blood;
But succoured virtue in distress,
And seldom failed of good success,
As numbers in their hearts must own,
Who, but for him, had been unknown

He kept with princes due decorum,
Yet never stood in awe before 'em:
He followed David's lesson just,
In princes never put his trust;
And would you make him truly sour,
Provoke him with a slave in power
The Irish senate if you named,
With what impatience he declaimed!
Fair LIBERTY was all his cry,
For her he stood prepared to die;
For her he boldly stood alone,
For her he oft exposed his own.
Two kingdoms, just as faction led,
Had set a price upon his head;
But not a traitor could be found
To sell him for six hundred pound[1]

The old self-esteem seems here to have grown into

[1] *On His Own Death.*

self-worship; and in the following lines *On the Day of Judgment*, the correlative indignation against mankind mounts into something like the rage of a madman:—

With a whirl of thought oppressed,
I sank from reverie to rest.
An horrid vision seized my head:
I saw the graves give up their dead!
Jove, armed with terrors, burst the skies,
And thunder roars, and lightning flies.
Amazed, confused, its fate unknown,
The world stands trembling at His throne.
While each pale sinner hung his head,
Jove, nodding, shook the heavens, and said:
"Offending race of human kind,
By nature, reason, learning, blind:
You, who through frailty stepped aside,
And you, who never fell, through pride;
You, who in different sects were shammed,
And come to see each other damned,
(So some folks told you, but they knew
No more of Jove's designs than you)—
The world's mad business now is o'er,
And I resent these pranks no more.
I to such blockheads set my wit!
I damn such fools! Go, go! You're bit."

It would appear, then, that the key to Swift's thought lies in an intellectual scorn—scorn alike for the shallow wits who, deeming themselves capable of fathoming the insoluble mystery of life, sneered at the doctrine of revealed religion, and for the unthinking public who took the speculations of such men seriously—blended with an ever-growing egotism. His own view of truth resembled that of Donne;[1] but he was essentially a man of action, and saw that it was necessary to assume as the basis of action—at least of national action—the compromise in Church and State arrived at in the Revolution of 1688. These two principles in combination also determine the conscious aim of Swift's literary style, which, as Johnson says, is "well suited to his thought." He himself describes, in a letter to Isaac Bickerstaff, the nature of the "simplicity" after which he strove—a mode of

[1] See vol. iii. p. 151.

expression founded on polite conversation, and equally removed from pedantry and slang:—

I should be glad to see you the instrument of introducing into our style that simplicity which is the best and truest ornament of most things in life, which the politer ages always aimed at in their buildings and dress (*simplex munditiis*) as well as their productions of wit. It is manifest that all new affected modes of speech, whether borrowed from the Court, the town, or the theatre, are the first perishing parts in any language; and, as I could prove by many hundred instances, have been so in ours. The writings of Hooker, who was a country clergyman, and of Parsons, the Jesuit, both in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, are in a style that, with very few allowances, would not offend any present reader; much more clear and intelligible than those of Sir H. Wooton, Sir Robert Naunton, Osborn, Daniel the historian, and several others who wrote later; but, being men of the Court, and affecting the phrases then in fashion, they are often either not to be understood, or appear perfectly ridiculous.[1]

Guided by this main principle of composition, Swift's style naturally moved ever farther away from the Pindaric manner with which he started. As he wrote mainly for the unsophisticated public, whose minds, he himself says, unless imposed upon, are open to reason, his tendency was, more and more, to banish ornament; and the metaphorical conceits of the seventeenth century became increasingly distasteful to him. The specimens of his verse already given illustrate the truth of Johnson's observation as to the scarcity of his metaphors; and they also point to his growing preference for octosyllabic verse as a vehicle for familiar writing. The genius of the heroic couplet required more antithesis than he cared to bestow on it, since his effects were always wrought much more by force of argument, unexpected turns of humour, or sheer intensity of feeling, than by the mere balance of ideas and words. In his metrical and in his prose writings the ideal was the same, "proper words in proper places": poetical diction, as a style to be aimed at *per se*, was a thing abhorrent to him, when once he had rejected the Pindaric manner.

[1] *The Tatler*, No. 230.

Comparing his familiar idiom in octosyllabic verse with that of Prior, I think every one will be struck with Swift's habit of confining each sentence, or at least each clause of a sentence, within two lines. For example, the poem entitled *The Logicians Refuted* consists of fifty-eight lines; and in these there are only two clauses which extend beyond the rhyme of the couplet.[1] This octosyllabic verse is founded on the style of *Hudibras*, which Swift constantly imitates by his use of disyllabic or trisyllabic rhymes: but his direct and trenchant manner is his own, and he studiously avoids the display of encyclopædic learning, which is characteristic of Butler. The following passage, from the delightful imitation of Horace which I have before alluded to, shows the familiar style of Swift at its best[2]:—

Said Harley: "I desire to know
From his own mouth if this be so.
Step to the Doctor straight, and say
I'd have him dine with me to-day."
Swift seemed to wonder what he meant,
Nor would believe my Lord had sent;
So never offered once to stir,
But coldly said, "Your servant, sir!
"Does he refuse me?" Harley cried
"He does, with insolence and pride.
Some few days after, Harley spies
The Doctor, fastened by the eyes
At Charing Cross among the rout,
Where painted monsters are hung out:
He pulled the string, and stopped his coach,
Beckoning the Doctor to approach.

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[1] Viz.:

Wise Aristotle and Smiglecius,
By ratiocinations specious,
Have strove to prove with great precision
With definition and division,
Homo est ratione præditum:
But for my soul I cannot credit 'em.

And

No judges, fiddlers, dancing-masters,
No pickpockets, or poetasters,
Are known to honest quadrupeds.

[2] For the earlier lines see p. 134.

Swift, who could neither fly nor hide,
Came sneaking to the chariot side,
And offered many a lame excuse:
He never meant the least abuse—
"My lord—the honour you designed—
Extremely proud—but I had dined—
I'm sure I never should neglect—
No man alive has more respect."
"Well, I shall think of that no more,
If you'll be sure to come at four."
The Doctor now obeys the summons,
Likes both his company and commons;
Displays his talent, sits till ten;
Next day invited comes again;
Soon grows domestic, seldom fails
Either at morning or at meals;
Came early, and departed late;
In short, the gudgeon took the bait
My lord would carry on the jest,
And down to Windsor takes his guest.
Swift much admires the place and air,
And longs to be a *canon* there,
In summer round the park to ride;
In winter never to reside.
"A *canon*! that's a place too mean
No, Doctor, you shall be a dean;
Two dozen canons round your stall,
And you the tyrant of them all·
You need but cross the *Irish seas*,
To live in plenty, power, and ease."
Poor Swift departs; and what is worse
With borrowed money in his purse,
Travels at least an hundred leagues,
And suffers numberless fatigues.
Suppose him now a dean complete,
Demurely lolling in his seat;
The silver verge, with decent pride,
Stuck underneath his cushion-side:
Suppose him gone through all vexations,
Patents, instalments, abjurations,
First fruits, and tenths, and chapter-treats:
Dues, payments, fees, demands, and cheats—
(The wicked laity's contriving
To hinder clergymen from thriving).
Now all the Doctor's money's spent,
His tenants wrong him in his rent;
The farmers, spitefully combined,
Force him to take his tithes in kind.

And Parvisol discounts arrears
By bills for taxes and repairs.
  Poor Swift, with all his losses vext,
Not knowing where to turn him next,
Above a thousand pounds in debt,
Takes horse and, in a mighty fret,
Rides day and night at such a rate,
He soon arrives at Harley's gate;
But was so dirty, pale, and thin,
Old Read would hardly let him in.
Said Harley, "Welcome, reverend Dean;
What makes your worship look so lean?
Why sure you won't appear in town
In that old wig and rusty gown?
I doubt your heart is set on pelf
So much, that you neglect yourself.
What! I suppose, now stocks are high,
You've some good purchase in your eye?
Or is your money out at use?"
  "Truce, good my lord, I beg a truce,"
(The Doctor in a passion cried).
"Your raillery is misapplied;
Experience I have dearly bought;
You know I am not worth a groat;
But you resolved to have your jest,
And 'twas a folly to contest.
Then, since you now have done your worst,
Pray leave me where you found me first."[1]

No two men could be more unlike each other in respect of character, genius, and fortune than were Swift and Gay. The latter was as obsequious, accommodating, and amiable, as the former was cynical, haughty, and independent. Swift was sparing and spartan in his habits; Gay was greedy, indolent, and ostentatious. In point of literary style everything that Swift wrote bore the stamp of originality, and, as Johnson says, even of singularity. Gay never initiated any characteristic line of thought: from the first his works owed their existence to other men's suggestions. Yet Gay met with none of the impediments that barred the ambition of Swift. Fortune, on the contrary, was always providing him with opportunities, which he generally wasted through careless-

[1] *Imitation of Horace*, Book i. Epistle 7.

ness and want of foresight; [illegible] some friendly hand was [illegible] difficulty of the [illegible] wrote attained a certain [illegible] fame, some of which has been [illegible] to the almost servile [illegible] self to the tastes and [illegible] him, exactly inverting the [illegible] whole human race displayed by [illegible] St. Patrick's. To his [illegible] the average thought and [illegible] ascribed the [illegible] occupies in the History of English Poetry.

John Gay was baptized at [illegible] the 16th of September [illegible]. He was the [illegible] of William Gay of [illegible] decayed Devonshire family—who died when the future poet was about ten years old. John was educated at the Grammar School of his native town, under the [illegible] first of one Rayner, and then of Robert Luck, a man not unknown in his day as a writer of Latin and English verse. Among his schoolfellows were Pope's friend, William Fortescue, and Aaron Hill. After leaving school, he was apprenticed, by an uncle who took charge of him, to a silk-mercer in London. It is said that he soon obtained a discharge from a business that was irksome to him and returned for a time to Barnstaple; but there are no records of the manner in which he contrived to support himself before the year 1708, when his first poem, called *Wine*, was published by William Keble. This was written in imitation of Philips' *Cider*; whether, however, it obtained anything like the same amount of popularity there is nothing to show.

But Gay took instinctively the surest road to secure the support that his limited genius required. In 1711 we find him issuing a pamphlet entitled *The Present State of Wit*, in which he gives an account of the origin and character of the leading newspapers of recent date, including *The Tatler*, *The Spectator*, and *The Examiner*,

with complimentary references to the leading writers in them. He thus found an easy entrance to the good graces of Steele and Swift; and in the same year it appears, by a letter from Cromwell to Pope, that Gay had addressed a letter to Lintot on the publication of his Miscellany, in which he speaks as follows of the author of *The Rape of the Lock* and the *Essay on Criticism*:—

When Pope's harmonious muse with pleasure roves
Amidst the plains, the murmuring streams and groves,
Attentive Echo, pleased to hear his songs,
Through the glad shade each warbling note prolongs;
His varied numbers charm our ravished ears,
His steady judgment far out-shoots his years,
And early in the youth a god appears.

This happy flattery, the beginning of an enduring friendship, was emphasised in 1713 by the dedication of *Rural Sports* to Pope with the humble acknowledgment of discipleship:—

My muse shall rove through flowery meads and plains,
And deck with Rural Sports her native strains,
And the same road ambitiously pursue
Frequented by the Mantuan swain and you.

Pope, who was then meditating his campaign against Ambrose Philips, with a rapid perception of the peculiar gifts of his admirer, suggested to him the idea of ridiculing Philips' *Pastorals* by a representation of country manners as they really were. Gay, working upon the hint in his own style, produced in 1714 *The Shepherd's Week*. The Prologue, in which this poem with flattering compliments was dedicated to Bolingbroke, shows that the author had contrived to insinuate himself into the good graces of the *arbitræ elegantiarum*, whom he thus celebrates:—

There saw I ladies all a-row
Before their Queen in seemly show.
No more I'll sing Buxonia brown,
Like goldfinch in her Sunday gown;
Nor Clumsilis, nor Marian bright,
Nor damsel that Hobnelia hight.

But Lansdown fresh as flower of May,
And Berkeley lady blithe and gay,
And Anglesey whose speech exceeds
The voice of pipe or oaten reeds;
And blooming Hyde, with eyes so rare,
And Montague beyond compare.
Such ladies fair would I depaint
In roundelay or sonnet quaint.

It was not so much by his lyric style, however, as by
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pe,
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17th of August 1713: "I am very much recreated and refreshed with the news of the advancement of *The Fan*, which I doubt not will delight the eye and sense of the fair, as long as that agreeable machine shall play in the hands of posterity." Whatever the opinion of this poor poem may be, among that part of posterity which uses the fan, it appears to have given much pleasure to the ladies of the day, who probably exerted all their influence to obtain for their favourite poet the post of Secretary to Lord Clarendon's Embassy, sent in June 1714 to the Court of Hanover to condole with the Elector on the loss of his mother, the Electress Sophia. On the 1st of August in the same year, Queen Anne having died, the Embassy came to a natural end, and with it all Gay's hopes of political preferment. Whenever fortune failed him, he seems to have been himself entirely helpless, yet never to have been without help. So it was now. Pope, who was busy at Binfield with his translation of Homer, offered to provide for him there, and meantime suggested to him the expediency of flattering some member of the Royal Family. Upon this hint, Gay published on 20th November 1714 his *Letter to a Lady: Occasioned by the Arrival of Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales*, a composition which he seems to have modelled on the half-panegyrical, half-humorous style of Montague's *Epistle to Dorset*, on the Battle of the Boyne. The following extract shows the effect of the mixed manner:—

Since all my schemes were baulked, my last resort,
I left the Muses to frequent the Court;
Pensive each night, from room to room I walked,
To one I bowed, and with another talked;
Inquired what news, or such a lady's name,
And did the next day, and the next, the same.
Places I found were daily given away,
And yet no friendly Gázette mentioned Gay.

. . . . .

Still every one I met in this agreed
That writing was my method to succeed;
But now preferments so possessed my brain,
That scarce I could produce a single strain:
Indeed I sometimes hammered out a line
Without connection or without design,
One morn upon the Princess this I writ,
An epigram that boasts more truth than wit.
The pomp of titles easy faith might shake
She scorned an Empire for religion's sake:
For this on earth the British crown is given,
And an immortal crown decreed in heaven.
Again while George's virtues raised my thought,
The following lines prophetic fancy wrought:
Methinks I see some Bard, whose heavenly rays
Shall rise in song, and warm a future age;
Look back through time, and, wrapt in wonder, trace
The glorious series of the Brunswick race.
From the first George these godlike kings descend,
A line which only with the world shall end.
The next a generous Prince renowned in arms,
And blessed, long blessed in Carolina's arms, etc., etc.

There does not seem to be much poetical tact in this; the Court may well have thought that the ridicule neutralised the flattery. At any rate the panegyric bore no fruit in the shape of preferment to the author, who was, nevertheless, well looked after by his patrons. In 1715 the Earl of Burlington supported him in his house, and paid the expenses of a holiday visit which he made to Devonshire. On this occasion Gay wrote, for the amusement of the Earl, his rhymed letter recording his adventures during *A Journey to Exeter*. Pulteney also took him as his companion to the Continent in 1717, and Lord Harcourt in 1718 invited him to Cockthorpe, whence he went on to Stanton Harcourt, another house

of Lord Harcourt's, where Pope was finishing his translation of the *Iliad.* Parnell made him a present of £16:2:6, the sum paid him in 1717 for his *Life of Zoilus.*

Besides the help which Gay thus received from his numerous friends, he also made money by the publication of plays and poems. Of the former the most successful was *The What D'ye Call It?* (produced on the 15th of February 1715), which contained the charming ballad: "'Twas when the Seas were Roaring." In 1717 was acted *Three Hours after Marriage*, an indecent and vulgar libel on Dr. Woodward, the eminent geologist. It was the joint work of Pope, Gay, and Arbuthnot, and though it failed on the stage, the sale of the play, among the maids of honour and numerous other aristocratic friends of the authors, was doubtless considerable. *Trivia, or The Art of Walking the Streets of London*, published in January 1716, proved very popular with the same class, who were largely represented on the list of subscribers for Gay's collected poems, published in two large quarto volumes in 1720, the names being for the most part the same as those appearing in *Mr. Pope's Welcome from Greece*, a humorous imitation of Ariosto, written also in that year to celebrate the completion of the translation of the *Iliad.* By the sale of these poems Gay made over £1000, which he invested entirely in South Sea stock. Secretary Craggs had a little while before made him a present of some of the same stock, and if he had been prudent enough to sell at the proper moment, he might have realised from his investments £20,000. With his usual want of foresight he let the opportunity slip, and lost everything that he had earned.

As before, he was saved by his friends from anything like distressful consequences. He was always a welcome companion to the Duke and Duchess of Queensberry. Lord and Lady Burlington gave him the freedom of their house. In 1722 he was appointed Lottery Commissioner, with a salary of £150, by Walpole, who allowed him to keep it till 1731, in spite of the attacks made on himself

in *The Beggars' Opera* and *Polly*. All this was not enough for Gay, who thought, through his life, that it was the duty of other people to make his fortune. "They wonder at each other for not providing for me," he writes to Swift, "and I wonder at them all."[1] In 1722 a fairly successful play, *The Captives*, increased his resources, and in 1725 he was made tutor to the Duke of Cumberland, for whom he wrote, and to whom he dedicated, his *Fables*, published in 1727. Queen Caroline had announced on her accession, in allusion to one of Gay's fables, that "she would take up the hare," and considered that she had fulfilled her promise in having him appointed gentleman-usher to the Princess Louisa, a child of two years old. The post was doubtless meant to be regarded as a sinecure, but Gay chose to consider the offer as an insult, and, believing that the disappointment of his expectations was due to Walpole, joined zealously in the opposition to the Minister, which was being conducted by Bolingbroke and Pulteney, abetted by Pope and Swift.

The poetical product of this opposition, as far as Gay was concerned, was *The Beggars' Opera*, acted for the first time at the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre on the 29th of January 1728, a play of which I shall have more to say in a later chapter; and this was followed by *Polly*, the acting of which was prohibited by the Lord Chamberlain in December of the same year. The suppression of the play on the stage proved a gold-mine to the poet. The whole of the aristocratic opposition hastened to subscribe for and buy his book when printed, and Arbuthnot describes in vivid language the effects of his popularity:—

The inoffensive John Gay is now become one of the obstructions to the peace of Europe, the terror of the ministers, the chief author of *The Craftsman*, and all the seditious pamphlets which have been published against the Government. He has got several turned out of their places; the greatest ornament of the Court banished from it for his sake; another great lady in danger of being *chassée* likewise; about seven or eight duchesses pushing forward like the ancient circumcelliones in the church,

[1] Gay to Swift: Letter of December 22, 1722.

who shall suffer martyrdom on his account first. He is the darling of the city. If he should travel about the country he would have hecatombs of roasted oxen sacrificed to him since he became so conspicuous. . . . I hope he will get a good deal of money by printing his play; but I really believe he would get more by showing his person; and I can assure you this is the very identical John Gay whom you formerly knew and lodged with in Whitehall two years ago.[1]

"The greatest ornament of the Court" banished for Gay's sake was the Duchess of Queensberry, who had made herself outrageously conspicuous by the zeal with which she solicited subscriptions for *Polly* at St. James's itself. These amounted to about £1200, so that, with what he received from the publishers, Gay must have made almost £3000 by the suppression of his play. He continued to live at Amesbury in Wiltshire, under the protection of the Duke and Duchess of Queensberry, till his death on the 4th of December 1732. On the 23rd of that month he was buried in Westminster Abbey.

The temperament and qualities of Gay, so characteristically displayed in his history, are not less vividly reflected in his verse. Beyond all his contemporaries, with the exception of Pope, he was by nature a poet, in the sense that he had an intuitive perception of the way in which whatever subject he selected ought to be treated in metre. He was without invention in the highest meaning of the word; as Johnson well puts it, "he had not in any great degree the *mens divinior*, the dignity of genius." As he was content to depend for his livelihood on the help of others, so in poetry he rarely formed designs of his own. His first poem, *Wine*, was inspired by the reading of John Philips' *Cider*; *Rural Sports* would not have been written if it had not been preceded by *Windsor Forest*; Pope set in motion the idea of *The Shepherd's Week*; Swift gave the hints required for *Trivia* and *The Beggars' Opera*. And yet all these works bear on them the unmistakable stamp of Gay's genius. He had a

[1] Arbuthnot to Swift. Letter of March 19, 1729; Aitken's *Life and Works of Arbuthnot*, p. 125.

unique gift for divining the drift of the public taste, and for casting his thought into the form best suited to the requirements of those whom he desired to please.

The happiness of his inspiration is well illustrated by his treatment of the Pastoral, a species of poetry which we have had frequent occasion to notice since the time of Spenser, and in which Breton, Barnfield, and Milton had all caught something of the spirit of Theocritus. With the Restoration the taste of the Court was coloured with the more artificial manner of Virgil, and with the pseudo-pastoralism of D'Urfé and Mlle. de Scudéry, as well as with the China-shepherdess affectations encouraged by the criticism of Fontenelle. But the love of reality, as well as of the country, was too strong in Englishmen to be eradicated by any fashion, and, as *The Spectator* shows, the national humour soon detected the absurdity of mere mythological formalism. The genius of Gay was well qualified to embody the mixed feeling struggling for expression in aristocratic society. He had a genuine, if sentimental, affection for rural things, well becoming a Devonian and the fellow-countryman of Browne of Tavistock. But he was also a born parodist; so that when Pope suggested to him the ridicule of Ambrose Philips' *Eclogues*, he perceived at once the humorous effects that might be produced by blending the classical forms of Theocritus and Virgil with English manners and folk-lore. There is a charming ease and grace in the adaptation of the *Pharmaceutria* of Theocritus and Virgil to the superstitious spells of the Devonian Hobnelia:—

> Two hazel-nuts I threw into the flame,
> And to each nut I gave a sweetheart's name.
> This with the loudest bounce me sore amazed;
> That in a flame of brightest colour blazed.
> As blazed the nut, so may thy passion grow,
> For 'twas thy nut that did so brightly glow.
> *With my sharp heel I three times mark the ground,*
> *And turn me thrice around, around, around.*
>
> As peascods once I plucked, I chanced to see
> One that was closely filled with three times three,

Which when I cropped I safely home conveyed,
And o'er my door the spell in secret laid.
My wheel I turned, and sang a ballad new,
While from the spindle I the fleeces drew;
The latch moved up, when who should first come in,
But in his proper person—Lubberkin?
I broke my yarn, surprised the sight to see,
Sure sign that he would break his word with me.
Eftsoons I joined it with my wonted sleight,
So may again his love with mine unite!
With my sharp heel I three times mark the ground,
And turn me thrice around, around, around.

But after all the heart of the Court was in the town; and here again Gay was able to gratify, with an exact propriety, the desire of his age to see an imaginative reflection of its own manners. His first attempt in this direction, *The Fan*, has indeed little merit, and compares ill with Addison's exquisitely playful treatment of the same subject in the prose of *The Spectator*.[1] But *Trivia* is an admirable performance. The air of lofty gravity, with which the poet advises his contemporaries how to avoid the dangers of the streets, is in the best vein of mock-heroic, and the modern reader may delight himself with a varied succession of images, preserving in bright and enduring colours the habits of his ancestors. What more vivid picture of the terrors of a dark and windy night in London in Queen Anne's reign can be found than in the following lines?—

Where a dim gleam the paly lanthorn throws
O'er the mid pavement, heapy rubbish grows;
Or archèd vaults their gaping jaws extend,
Or the dark caves to common-shores descend.
Oft by the winds extinct the signal lies,
Or smothered in the glimmering socket dies,
Ere night has half rolled round her ebon throne;
In the wide gulph the shattered coach, o'erthrown,
Sinks with the snorting steeds; the reins are broke,
And from the crackling axle flies the spoke.
So when famed Eddystone's far shooting ray,
That led the sailor through the stormy way,

[1] *Spectator*, No. 102.

Was from its rocky roots by billows torn,
And the high turret in the whirlwind borne,
Fleets bilged their sides against the craggy land,
And pitchy ruins blackened all the strand.

The feats of the London pickpockets of the period are thus described :—

Where the mob gathers, swiftly shoot along,
Nor idly mingle in the noisy throng,
Lured by the silver hilt, amid the swarm,
The subtil artist will thy side disarm.
Nor is thy flaxen wig with safety worn;
High on the shoulder, in a basket borne,
Lurks the sly boy; whose hand, to rapine bred,
Plucks off the curling honours of thy head.
Here dives the skulking thief with practised sleight,
And unfelt fingers make thy pocket light.
Where's now thy watch with all its trinkets flown?
And thy late snuff-box is no more thy own.
But lo! his bolder thefts some tradesman spies;
Swift from his prey the scudding lurcher flies;
Dext'rous he 'scapes the coach with nimble bounds,
Whilst every honest tongue "Stop thief!" resounds.
So speeds the wily fox, alarmed by fear,
Who lately filched the turkey's callow care;
Hounds following hounds grow louder as he flies,
And injured tenants join the hunter's cries.
Breathless he stumbling falls: ill-fated boy!
Why did not honest work thy youth employ?
Seized by rough hands he's dragged amid the rout,
And stretched beneath the pump's incessant spout:
Or plunged in miry ponds he gasping lies;
Mud chokes his mouth, and plasters o'er his eyes.

The blots on *Trivia* are the foolish mythological episodes which Gay apparently thought would improve the mock-heroic framework. He had not quite learnt the art of adapting the spirit of the classics to his own surroundings; but in his *Fables*, the most popular of his works, he employs the familiar style with complete success. All of these are written in octosyllabic metre, more artfully managed, at its best, than by either Swift or Prior. He avoids the over-facile flow of the former, and he is more brief and trenchant than the latter. The *Fables*, however,

are of very unequal merit: in many of them the moral is irrelevant or trivial; and, as Johnson says, some of them do not conform to the definition of a fable. One of the most happy, in point both of wit and style, is *The Goat without a Beard*, from which the following passage may stand for an example of the best familiar manner:—

> Resolved to smooth his shaggy face,
> He sought the barber of the place.
> A flippant monkey, spruce and smart
>
> . . .
>
> . . .
>
> . . . .
>
> Ranged cups that in the window stood,
> Lined with red rags to look like blood,
> Did well his three-fold trade explain,
> Who shaved, drew teeth, and breathed a vein.
> The Goat he welcomes with an air,
> And seats him in his wooden chair:
> Mouth, nose, and cheek, the lather hides:
> Light, smooth, and swift, the razor glides.
> "I hope your custom, Sir," says Pug;
> "Sure never face was half so smug."
> The Goat, impatient for applause,
> Swift to the neighbouring hill withdraws:
> The shaggy people grinned and stared.
> "Heighday! what's here? without a beard!
> Say, brother, whence the dire disgrace?
> What envious hand hath robbed your face?"
> When thus the fop with smiles of scorn:
> "Are beards by civil nations worn?
> Even Muscovites have mowed their chins.
> Shall we, like formal Capuchins,
> Stubborn in pride, retain the mode,
> And bear about the hairy load?
> Whene'er we through the village stray,
> Are we not mocked along the way,
> Insulted with loud shouts of scorn,
> By boys our beards disgraced and torn?"
> "Were you no more with goats to dwell,
> Brother, I grant you reason well,"
> Replies a bearded chief. "Beside,
> If boys can mortify thy pride,
> How wilt thou stand the ridicule
> Of our whole flock? Affected fool!
> Coxcombs, distinguished from the rest,
> To all but coxcombs are a jest."

The moral of this fable is eminently applicable to the character of Gay. Entirely devoid of the haughty self-esteem of Swift, and unconscious of anything dishonourable in his own state of dependence, he never dreamed of becoming famous by affecting singularity. His easy and self-indulgent, though affectionate and obliging, nature was quite content to reflect in poetry the sentiments and manners of the pleasure-loving society about him. With all its artifice that society still retained memories of more primitive ages; in spite of its superficial cynicism it could appreciate the characters of the Sir Roger de Coverleys who still survived in its midst; and Gay, who enjoyed its caressing patronage, without being altogether corrupted by its affectations, was well qualified by his genius to express what remained of its feeling for simplicity. Pope justly described him as "in wit a man, simplicity a child," and the mixture in his character of country sentiment with court fashions finds analogous expression in the blended wit and nature of his verse. He appreciated with equal keenness the refinement of classical form and the romantic pathos of the ballad style, and he knew how to blend the two manners.

Sweet William's Farewell to Black-Eyed Susan is perhaps the most charming artificial ballad in the language; and, as it is certainly the best illustration of what has been said, I will in justice to Gay here insert it at length:—

> All in the Downs the fleet was moored,
> The streamers waving in the wind,
> When black-eyed Susan came aboard,
> Oh where shall I my true love find?
> Tell me, ye jovial sailors, tell me true,
> If my sweet William sails among the crew.
>
> William, who, high upon the yard,
> Rocked with the billow to and fro,
> Soon as her well-known voice he heard,
> He sighed and cast his eyes below.
> The cord slides quickly through his glowing hands,
> And (quick as lightning) on the deck he stands.

So the sweet lark, high poised in air,
Shuts close his pinions to his breast,
(If chance his mate's shrill call he hear)
And drops at once into her nest.
The noblest captain in the British fleet
Might envy William's lips those kisses sweet.

O Susan, Susan, lovely dear,
My vows shall ever true remain;
Let me kiss off that falling tear,
We only part to meet again.
Change as ye list, ye winds; my heart shall be
The faithful compass that still points to thee.

Believe not what the landsmen say,
Who tempt with doubts thy constant mind;
They'll tell thee sailors, when away,
In every port a mistress find.
Yes, yes, believe them when they tell thee so,
For thou art present wheresoe'er I go.

If to far India's coast we sail,
Thy eyes are seen in diamonds bright,
Thy breath is Afric's spicy gale,
Thy skin is ivory so white.
Thus every beauteous object that I view
Wakes in my soul some charm of lovely Sue.

Though battle call me from thy arms,
Let not my pretty Susan mourn;
Though cannons roar, yet, safe from harms,
William shall to his dear return.
Love turns aside the balls that round me fly,
Lest precious tears should drop from Susan's eye.

The boatswain gave the dreadful word,
The sails their swelling bosom spread,
No longer must she stay aboard;
They kissed, she sighed, he hung his head:
Her lessening boat unwilling rows to land,
Adieu, she cries: and waved her lily hand.

CHAPTER VI

ALEXANDER POPE

THE poetry of Pope reflects all the contrary influences that were struggling in the English imagination during the first half of the eighteenth century. Born in 1688, the year of the Revolution, he came of a family whose religion that Revolution tended to proscribe. By his studious habits he made himself at an early age familiar with the manner of the English poetry produced under the old *régime*. His great precocity, on the other hand, brought him, while still little more than a boy, into companionship with men of affairs. He was a *protégé* of Harley, a friend of Swift and Arbuthnot, an acquaintance of Addison. Before he was twenty-one he threw into a form of metrical criticism ideas of a kind that were engaging the attention of the best writers in *The Spectator*. Before he was twenty-four he had invented a form of unrivalled brilliancy to reflect the passing manners of aristocratic society. In a softer mood he caught in his verse something of the tone of gallantry and romance still lingering from the chivalry of past ages, but from this he soon turned to indulge his genius for satire in a protracted war with the literary Dunces of his own day. The ambiguous theology of the time provided him with materials for didactic poetry, contemporary manners with subjects for moral satire; in the decline of life he found himself using his favourite weapon, in defence of the cause, and in the front ranks, of the political Opposition. Alike in his poetry, his criticism, and his correspondence, we

seem to see the mind of the country taking an external shape during the period of struggle that followed the first establishment of Civil Liberty.

Alexander Pope was born in London on the 21st of May 1688. His father, a linen-draper in Lombard Street, is thought with some probability to have been the son of Alexander Pope, Rector of Thruxton in Hampshire, and seems to have been converted from Protestantism at Lisbon, where he had been placed with a merchant to learn business. The young Alexander's education was slight and desultory, his first tutor being William Bannister, a Roman Catholic priest, from whose care he was removed to a Roman Catholic School at Twyford, near Winchester, and afterwards to one kept by Thomas Deane, a pervert from the Anglican Church, who had once been a Fellow of University College, Oxford. When his father left London about 1700 to live at Binfield in Windsor Forest he was again placed under the charge of a priest, but was removed from it after a few months. "This," he said afterwards to Spence, "was all the teaching I ever had, and God knows it extended a very little way."[1]

At Binfield he was left very much to his own inclinations, which carried him over a wide range of discursive study:—

> In a few years (he says of himself) I had dipped into a great number of the English, French, Italian, Latin, and Greek poets. This I did without any design but that of pleasing myself, and got the languages by hunting after the stories in the several poets I read, rather than read the books to get the languages[2]

From studying the poets he went on to imitate them:

> My first taking to imitating (he told Spence) was not out of vanity but humility: I saw how defective my own things were, and endeavoured to mend my manner by copying good strokes from others.[3]

The original compositions, to which he thus refers, were the *Ode to Solitude*, written in his twelfth year, and

[1] Spence, *Anecdotes*, p. 193 [2] *Ibid.* p. 193. [3] *Ibid* p 278.

Alcander, an epic poem composed when he was between thirteen and fifteen, which he afterwards burned, preserving from it two couplets, one in the *Essay on Criticism*,[1] and one in *The Dunciad*.[2] In his fourteenth year he also wrote a satire against the author of *Successio*, a couplet of which he used for *The Dunciad*.[3] He interested himself besides at the same age in theology, and told Atterbury in later years that the controversy between the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches made him turn Papist or Protestant according to the last book he read. Meditating on all these things in long solitary walks through Windsor Forest, he acquired those habits of morbid introspection which clung to him through life, and were the source of some of his most deplorable actions.

When he was about fifteen he translated the First Book of Statius' *Thebais*; but as this work was not published till 1713, the first draft of it was no doubt thoroughly revised in the interval. A year later, according to his own account, he composed his *Pastorals*, which were certainly in existence before 20th April 1706, when one of them had been seen by Tonson, who desired to have the privilege of printing the series. They did not appear in print, however, till 2nd May, when they were published as part of Tonson's Sixth Miscellany. All of them were written by Pope on the assumption that Pastoral was one of the *natural* divisions of poetry, and therefore subject to rules of the same kind that Aristotle prescribed for the Drama. In the "Discourse on Pastoral Poetry," which he prefixed to them in 1717, he says:—

> A pastoral is an imitation of the action of a shepherd, or one considered under that character. The form of this imitation is dramatic, or narrative, or mixed of both; the fable simple; the manners not too polite nor too rustic; the thoughts are plain, yet admit a little quickness, but that short and flowing; the expression humble, yet as pure as the language will afford; neat but not florid; easy and yet lively. In short the fable, manners, thoughts, and expressions, are full of the greatest simplicity in

[1] *Essay on Criticism*, 191-192.
[2] *Dunciad*, iii. 55-56.
[3] *Ibid.* i. 183-184.

nature. The complete character of this poem consists in simplicity, brevity, and delicacy; the two first of which render an Eclogue natural, and the last delightful.

This view is not very different from the self-conscious theory of the Pastoral defined by Fontenelle, on whose Discourse Pope largely based his own.[1] In the same *Miscellany* were Six Pastorals by Ambrose Philips which professed to depend upon a somewhat different principle:

There is no kind of poetry, says Philips, if happily executed, but gives delight; and [illegible] a peculiar manner; for as [illegible], the country affords not only the most delightful scenes and prospects, but likewise the most pleasing images of life.

Philips' *Pastorals* had no more claim than Pope's to be considered "simple" or "natural." They too were written in the heroic couplet, and the only approach that their author made towards Anglicising his shepherds was to give them the clownish names invented by Spenser, and to make them talk of fairies instead of the sylvan deities of Greece and Rome. Both poets, however, were loudly applauded for their performances, and Pope was therefore, for the moment, quite ready to be magnanimous in praising his rival, of whose pastorals he said that "we had no better Eclogues in our language." He continued his own work in this direction by writing, about the same time, the pastoral descriptions of *Windsor Forest*;[2] and, a little later, by adapting the Messianic passages in Isaiah to the style of Virgil's Fourth Eclogue. His *Messiah* was published in *The Spectator* on the 14th of May 1712.

Events soon gave a new turn to his feelings. As often happens where literary coteries are concerned, Philips began to be praised at the expense of Pope. The former was a leading member of the Whig Club at

[1] "Il en va, ce me semble, des Eglogues [illegible]

[2] [illegible] extending as far as v. 290.

Button's, and his political friends were inclined to discover wonderful qualities in his poetry. Addison began with a puffing allusion in *The Spectator*. "We see," he says, "he has given a new life, and a more natural beauty to this way of writing, by substituting in the place of those antiquated fables the superstitious mythology which prevails among the shepherds of our own country." In course of time this thoroughly undeserved panegyric was expanded, in five papers of *The Guardian*, by a writer who demonstrated that there had only been four true masters of pastoral poetry in above two thousand years: "Theocritus, who left his dominions to Virgil; Virgil, who left his to his son, Spenser; and Spenser, who was succeeded by his eldest born, Philips."

Pope, who was not mentioned, was annoyed, and resolved to expose the falseness of the criticism by a trick equally witty and dexterous. He wrote a sixth paper, in the same exaggerated vein of flattery, contrasting Philips with Pope, the professed imitator of the Classics. This he sent anonymously to Steele, as editor of *The Guardian*; and the latter is said to have been completely deceived by the irony, and to have only printed the paper after first showing it to Pope, who professed his indifference to the criticism. Admirable as the gravity of the style is, it is somewhat difficult to believe that an Irishman like Steele should have failed to perceive the ridicule of the following praise of Philips' "beautiful rusticity":—

> "O woful day! O day of woe!" quoth she,
> "And woful I who live the day to see."

The simplicity of diction (says Pope), the melancholy flowing of the numbers, the solemnity of the sound, and the easy turn of the words in this dirge (to make use of our author's expression) are extremely elegant.

In another of his pastorals a shepherd utters a dirge not much inferior to the former in the following lines:—

> Ah me the while! ah me! the luckless day!
> Ah luckless lad! the rather might I say;
> Ah silly I! more silly than my sheep,
> Which on the flowery plains I once did keep!

How he still charms the ear with these artful repetitions of the epithets! And how significant is the last verse! I defy the most common reader to repeat them without feeling some motion of compassion.[1]

With this episode—which very probably opened his eyes to the radical defects of his own pastoral performances—closed a period of great importance in Pope's poetical development, namely his formal imitation of classical diction, before he had completely learned to assimilate the classical spirit, and to apply it to the circumstances of his age. Approaching the art of poetry through translation, because he early perceived the shortcomings of his original work, he was for some time in bondage to his admiration for the great poets of Greece and Rome, whom he apostrophises in his *Essay on Criticism*:—

> Hail, bards triumphant! born in happier days,
> Immortal heirs of universal praise;
> Whose honours with increase of ages grow,
> As streams roll down enlarging as they flow;
> Nations unborn your mighty names shall sound,
> And worlds applaud that must not yet be found!
> O may some spark of your celestial fire
> The last, the meanest of your sons, inspire,
> (That on weak wings from far pursues your flights,
> Glows while he reads, yet trembles as he writes)
> To teach vain wits a science little known,
> T' admire superior sense, and doubt their own.

Doubting still his own sense, he strove to imitate Virgil in the external effects both of his diction and versification. As regards his diction he fancied that he was writing classically when he said in *Windsor Forest* that "Blushing Flora paints th' enamelled ground"; that "Cancer glows with Phœbus' fiery car"; that "The clamorous lapwings feel the leaden death"; or that the angler "hopes the scaly breed."[2]

Isaiah had said: "Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see." Pope translated this, in his *Messiah*, into "classical" English:—

[1] *Guardian*, No. 40. [2] *Windsor Forest*, 38, 132, 139, 147

Hear him, ye deaf, and all ye blind, behold!
He from thick films shall purge the visual ray,
And on the sightless eyeball pour the day.

"I will set in the desert the fir-tree, and the pine, and the box-tree together" of Isaiah's text becomes in *The Messiah*:—

Waste sandy valleys, once perplexed with thorn,
The spiry fir and shapely box adorn.
To leafless shrubs the flowering palms succeed,
And od'rous myrtle to the noisome weed.

But the most important effect produced by the poetical practice of this period was on Pope's versification. Almost all critics have spoken with admiration of the new vein of harmony introduced into English poetry by his *Pastorals*, which ought indeed to be regarded primarily as exercises in metre. At the same time it is not an uncommon thing to find the smoothness and regularity of Pope's rhythms contrasted disadvantageously with the freedom and variety of Dryden's style: a method of comparison and contrast which altogether ignores the different objects aimed at by each poet. Dryden's purpose was to develop in English verse the colloquial principle which had been applied by a succession of poets from Drayton downwards. More and more he felt that his own strength lay in treating the heroic couplet as an instrument "fittest for discourse." A numerous succession of prologues and epilogues had accustomed him to converse in metre with public audiences, and had trained him to form, within the limits of the couplet, rhythmical sentences, expressive of his ardent and masculine genius. These seemed to follow almost accidentally the movements of his imagination, and were musical without method through sheer vigour of thought. Often, no doubt, the course of thinking produced a musical succession of couplets, as in the famous passage in *Aureng Zebe*;[1] the lines on old age translated from Lucretius;[2] the expression of penitence in *The Hind and the Panther*[3] for his own scepticism and un-

[1] Vol. iv. p. 410. [2] Vol. iii. p. 529.
[3] Vol. iii. p. 518.

belief; and many other melodious flights of the same kind. But there is no evidence that Dryden worked on the regular musical principle of varying the cæsura in successive lines, explained by Pope in a letter to Cromwell;[1] indeed the verses in his poetry without a regular pause are innumerable.

Pope, on the contrary, in his early poems, though he by no means rejected the colloquial basis of the couplet, modified it by a large infusion of romantic and literary elements. Unlike Dryden, he was almost a stranger to the stage. A lonely and reflective student, his conversation, at least as a youth, was with books rather than men: he wrote on set themes, and strove to imitate in English the harmonies of the Latin poets whom he translated. Hence in his *Pastorals* there was an imaginative tendency which did not enter into Dryden's genius, who could never have conceived a musical effect like the following:—

Go, gentle gales, and bear my sighs along!
For her the feathered quires neglect their song:
For her the limes their pleasing shades deny.
For her the lilies hang their heads and die.
Ye flowers, that droop, forsaken by the spring,
Ye birds, that left by summer cease to sing,
Ye trees, that fade when autumn heats remove,
Say is not absence death to those who love?

Go, gentle gales, and bear my sighs away!
Cursed be the fields that cause my Delia's stay,
Fade every blossom, wither every tree,
Die every flower, and perish all but she.
What have I said? Where'er my Delia flies,
Let spring attend, and sudden flowers arise.
Let opening roses, knotted oaks adorn,
And liquid amber drop from every thorn.

Go, gentle gales, and bear my sighs along!
The birds shall cease to tune their evening song,
The winds to breathe, the waving woods to move,
And streams to murmur, ere I cease to love.
Not bubbling fountains to the thirsty swain,
Not balmy sleep to labourers faint with pain,
Not showers to larks, not sunshine to the bee
Are half so charming as thy sight to me.

[1] *Pope's Works* (Elwin and Courthope), vol. v. pp. 20 21.

Go, gentle gales, and bear my sighs away!
Come, Delia, come; ah, why this long delay?
Through rocks and caves the name of Delia sounds,
Delia each cave and echoing rock rebounds.
Ye powers, what pleasing frenzy soothes my mind!
Do lovers dream, or is my Delia kind?
She comes, my Delia comes! Now cease my lay,
And cease, ye gales, to bear my sighs away.

Before sending to *The Guardian* the review of Philips' *Pastorals*, Pope had shown the versatility of his genius in a composition formulating the critical principles by which he regulated his art. The *Essay on Criticism* was probably written in 1709. This was Pope's own statement in 1717, and in every edition of his collected works up to 1743, when it is stated that the *Essay* was "the work of an author who had not yet attained the twentieth year of his age"; to explain which he seems to have told Richardson that "the *Essay on Criticism* was indeed written in 1707, though said 1709 by mistake." Pope was in his latter years anxious to seize every opportunity of establishing a character for precocity, and his uncorroborated statements are not deserving of confidence. The poem was at any rate published on 15th May 1711; it was, on 20th June in the same year, virulently attacked by Dennis; and on 20th December was highly praised by Addison in *The Spectator*. Praise and depreciation of this work have continued to appear, on almost the same lines and in nearly equal proportions, from those days to our own. I have set down my own opinion of the *Essay* in detail in the *Life of Pope*, which forms part of the latest edition of his collected works, and I see no reason to modify substantially what I have there said.[1] But as this judgment has lately been questioned by an eminent critic, I shall take this opportunity of briefly recapitulating my view:—

Attempts have been made (says Mr. Saintsbury) to give Pope a high place [as a critic] on the score of his charges to "follow Nature." Unfortunately this is mere translation of Boileau, of

[1] *Pope's Works* (Elwin and Courthope), vol. v. chap. iii.

Vida, and of Horace, in the first place; and, still more unfortunately, the poet's own arguments on his doctrine show that what he meant by following Nature, and what we mean by it, are two quite different things. He, usually at least, means "stick to the usual, the ordinary, the commonplace." [1]

I venture to think this is a somewhat inadequate statement of the point at issue. Whether Pope's idea of "following Nature" was precisely the same as our own (which, for all we know, may be equally transient) does not seem to me a very important matter; and to define with mathematical precision what is meant by "Nature" is impossible. Nor does it appear to be necessarily a proof of Pope's want of critical power that Boileau, Vida, and Horace, had all arrived at the same conclusion before him. But it is a matter of importance that the principle recognised by these poets was in essence the same as that of Pope; that it was radically different from the principle followed in practice by Marino, Gongora, Voiture, Cowley, and many other poets of repute in the seventeenth century; and that in Pope's antagonism to the principles of the Metaphysical School is reflected the opposition between the decadent spirit of the Middle Ages and the advancing spirit of the Renaissance. To say that the advice of Pope means only "stick to the usual, the ordinary, the commonplace," is scarcely a just way of interpreting the deeper movement of taste that runs beneath the surface of his argument.

Pope meant something definite by the following of "Nature"; and he shows what his meaning is by his constant antithesis (often, it is true, ambiguous and confused) between this word and "wit." Others had of course expressed before him the same artistic perception. Mulgrave had said in his *Essay on Poetry*:—

> That silly thing men call sheer wit avoid,
> With which our age so nauseously is cloyed.
> Humour is all; wit should be only brought
> To turn agreeably some proper thought.

Granville had put the same thought into another shape:—

[1] *History of Criticism*, vol. ii. p. 45[illegible]

Poets are limners of another kind,
To copy out ideas in the mind;
Words are the paint by which their thoughts are shown
And Nature sits the object to be drawn;
The written picture we applaud or blame,
But as the due proportions are the same,
Who driven with ungovernable fire,
Or void of art, beyond these bounds aspire,
Gigantic forms and monstrous births alone
Produce, which Nature, shocked, disdains to own.[1]

Keeping in view this principle of following Nature Dryden had recommended the constant study of Virgil as a model:—

He (Virgil) is everywhere above conceits of epigrammatic wit and gross hyperboles; he maintains majesty in the midst of plainness; he shines but glares not; and is stately without ambition, which is the vice of Lucan. I drew my definition of poetical wit from my particular consideration of him: for propriety of thoughts and words are only to be found in him; and where they are proper they will be delightful.[2]

Opinions like these—which from the Restoration onwards were always multiplying—far from being in Pope's age "commonplace," had still their battle to fight against that idea of "Wit" which, I have attempted to show in an earlier chapter, sprang out of the decay of Mediævalism.[3] The *Essay on Criticism* was an effort to codify the new law of the Renaissance with regard to poetical imitation. It is divided into three sections. In the first Pope dwells upon the chaotic state of Criticism in his day, and the many abuses of the art which consequently prevail; lays down his main rule of following Nature; and explains that the rules to be observed must be studied in the works of the great classical writers, because their way of proceeding is "Nature still, but Nature methodised." In the second section of the *Essay*, which is much the finest, he illustrates the necessity of his doctrine by many examples of False Wit, and produces his famous definition of True Wit, which he declares to be:—

[1] *On Unnatural Flights in Poetry.* [2] See vol. iii. p. 531.
[3] Vol. iii. chapter vi.

Nature to advantage dressed,
What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed.

In the third section he describes the character of the good critic, and gives an historical sketch of those who have most distinguished themselves in the art, closing it with an elegant compliment to Walsh, who, as he told Spence, was the first to advise him to aim at "correctness." The execution of the central design is very irregular; the arrangement being often confused, and the particular thoughts so unconnected as to leave the impression that the epigrams have been produced without method. Pope had as yet by no means acquired that mastery of expression which distinguished him in his maturity; and there are probably more faulty constructions in the *Essay on Criticism* than in any other of his works. Much ambiguity arises from the use of the word "wit," which, in the *Essay*, has the various meanings of understanding, genius, conceit, and judgment, and is sometimes employed in the same sentence to express contrary ideas, as:—

Some, to whom Heaven in wit has been profuse,
Want as much more, to turn it to its use;
For wit and judgment often are at strife,
Though meant each other's aid, like man and wife.

Now and then the poet appears to be beaten by difficulties of expression, as in the following passage, where the general structure of the verse seems to require in some form the use of the word "imagination" in the second line.—

Thus in the soul while memory prevails,
The solid power of understanding fails;
Where beams of warm imagination play,
The memory's soft figures melt away;

and in more than one couplet the sense is entirely obscured by the elliptical grammar, as in these very poor and flat lines:—

Nor suffers Horace more in wrong translations
By wits, than critics in as wrong quotations.

It must be added that both the history of criticism and the appreciation of individual critics contained in the

Essay are crude and sometimes puerile. These defects are, however, excusable when the age of the author is considered, and if this be taken into account, few impartial judges will deny that, for a boy of twenty-one, the *Essay on Criticism* is a marvellous performance. When we estimate it with reference to Pope's claim to be held a representative critic, we are bound to remember that his aim was to produce not a treatise of analytical reason, but a didactic poem. Judged by this standard, Johnson's praise of the *Essay* does not seem to be exaggerated :—

> The *Essay on Criticism* is one of Pope's greatest works, and if he had written nothing else would have placed him among the first critics and the first poets, as it exhibits every mode of excellence that can embellish or dignify didactic composition—selection of matter, novelty of arrangement, justice of precept, splendour of illustration, and propriety of digression.[1]

In the same year that the *Essay on Criticism* was published, Pope produced in *The Rape of the Lock* the most brilliant illustration that he, or indeed any other poet, ever devised of the principles advocated in the *Essay*. It happened that, in May 1711, Robert, seventh Baron Petre, in a freak of gallantry, cut a lock of hair from the head of Arabella Fermor, a young lady of beauty and fashion. Both parties belonged to leading Roman Catholic families, and as the incident seemed likely to cause divisions in a religious society which it was expedient to keep united, Pope's friend Caryll, of Ladyholt in Sussex, suggested that he might bring about a reconciliation by treating the subject humorously in poetry. The fruit of the suggestion appeared in the first draft of *The Rape of the Lock*, published in Lintot's Miscellany of May 1712. In this early form the poem consisted of two cantos, containing together 334 lines. It was without the machinery of the Sylphs, the episode of Belinda's toilet, the voyage up the Thames to Hampton Court, the game of Ombre, and the mission of Umbriel to the Cave of Spleen. These additions were made in 1713, after Pope had become acquainted with the

[1] *Lives of the Poets: Pope.*

book of the Comte de Gabalis on the Rosicrucians; and *The Rape of the Lock* then assumed its expanded form of five cantos containing 794 lines. The motto, adapted from Martial, prefixed to the first edition, was replaced by one from Ovid, in order to emphasise Pope's declaration in dedicating the poem to Miss Fermor, that almost all the incidents and characters were fictitious.

The poem thus altered was received with almost universal applause. It produced the happy effect hoped for by Caryll, and the only person glanced at in it who seems, and not unnaturally, to have been offended was Sir George Brown, the original of Sir Plume. One harsh voice was, however, raised in disparagement of its quality. Dennis, the critic, now, through many pin-pricks, become Pope's implacable enemy, could see no merit in the performance. He proved, in a pamphlet, by many weighty arguments, that the whole thing was an imposture; and Pope, who respected his ability, gave heed to his criticisms. He even paid him the compliment of making changes to meet his objections, and when *The Rape of the Lock* appeared among the collected poems in the quarto of 1717, it was found to contain a final improvement in the speech of Clarissa, inserted for the first time in the fifth canto.

The censure of Dennis, which seems to have made the most impression upon Pope, was ethical rather than æsthetic. "*The Rape of the Lock*," said the critic, "is an empty trifle, which cannot have a moral." Clarissa's speech is evidently intended to supply the omission thus noted; and as, amidst the chorus of admiration lavished upon the poem, Dennis's criticism, in spite of the importance which Pope attached to it, has never received much attention, it seems worth while to consider it in connection with what Joseph Warton says in praise of the work:—

> I hope (the latter observes in his *Essay on the Genius of Pope*) it will not be thought an exaggerated panegyric to say that *The Rape of the Lock* is the best *satire* extant, that it contains the truest and liveliest picture of modern life, and that the subject is of a more elegant nature, as well as more artfully conducted, than that of any other heroic-comic poem

Were satire the essence of *The Rape of the Lock*, as Warton's criticism seems to imply, it would be difficult not to agree with Dennis that the poem should be placed on a lower level than *Le Lutrin*. For Dennis's description of the ethical qualities of Boileau's poem is perfectly just: he calls it "an important satirical poem upon the luxury, pride, and animosities of the popish clergy, and the moral is that when Christians, and especially the clergy, run into great heats about religious trifles, their animosity proceeds from the want of that religion which is the pretence of their quarrel." Pope thought it a sufficient answer to say that if "female sex" were substituted for "popish clergy," "ladies" for "clergy," and "sense" for "religion," Dennis's description would apply to *The Rape of the Lock*. But even if this were so, it is certain that, in weightiness of moral, *The Rape of the Lock* could not compare with *Le Lutrin*.

Moreover, in point of art, the skill with which Boileau applies the heroic-comic style for the purposes of moral satire is at least equal to anything in *The Rape of the Lock*. The special excellence of Boileau's style lies in his descriptions and his speeches. Choosing nicely selected words to exalt mean objects, and never deviating from the grave seriousness with which he makes his speakers expose their own ignorance, sloth, or gluttony, his verse is a model of taste and propriety, as may be inferred from the following specimen, describing the council held by the party of the precentor, on hearing the tidings of the replacing of the lectern:—

> Alain tousse, et se lève; Alain ce savant homme,
> Qui de Bauny vingt fois a lu toute la Somme,
> Qui possède Abéli, qui sait tout Raconis,
> Et même entend, dit-on, le latin d'A-Kempis.[1]
> N'en doutez point, leur dit ce savant canoniste,
> Ce coup part, j'en suis sûr, d'une main janséniste.
> Mes yeux en sont témoins; j'ai vu moi-même hier
> Entrer chez le prélat le chapelain Garnier.

[1] The modern names in these verses are those of anti-Jansenists opposed to Arnauld, whose side Boileau took in the controversy between the latter and Jesuits. The Latin of the *Imitatio* is at once barbarous and easy to understand.

Arnauld, cet hérétique ardent à nos détruire,
Par ce ministre adroit tente de le séduire:
Sans doute il aura lu, dans son saint Augustin,[1]
Qu'autrefois saint Louis érigea ce Lutrin.
Il va nous inonder des torrents de sa plume:
Il faut, pour lui répondre, ouvrir plus d'un volume.
Consultons sur ce point quelque auteur signalé;
Voyons si des lutrins Bauny n'a point parlé.
Etudions enfin, il en est temps encore;
Et pour ce grand projet, tantôt dès que l'Aurore
Rallumera le jour dans l'onde enseveli,
Que chacun prenne en main le moelleux Abéli.
Ce conseil imprévu de nouveau les étonne:
Sur-tout le gros Évrard d'épouvante en frissonne.
Moi! dit-il, qu'à mon âge, écolier tout nouveau,
J'aille pour un lutrin me troubler le cerveau!
O le plaisant conseil! Non, non, songeons à vivre:
Va maigrir, si tu veux, et sécher sur un livre.
Pour moi, je lis la Bible autant que l'Alcoran:
Je sais ce qu'un fermier nous doit rendre par an;
Sur quelle vigne à Reims nous avons hypothèque;
Vingt muids rangés chez moi font ma bibliothèque.
En plaçant un pupitre on croit nous rabaisser;
Mon bras seul sans latin saura le renverser.
Que m'importe qu'Arnauld me condamne ou m'approuve?
J'abats ce que me nuit par-tout où je le trouve:
C'est là mon sentiment. A quoi bon tant d'apprêts?
Du reste, dejeunons, messieurs, et buvons frais"
Ce discours que soutient l'embonpoint du visage,
Retablit l'appétit, réchauffe le courage;
Mais le chantre sur-tout en paroit rassuré.
"Oui, dit-il, le pupitre a deja trop duré.
Allons sur sa ruine assurer ma vengeance.
Donnons à ce grand œuvre une heure d'abstinence;
Et qu'au retour tantôt un ample déjeuner
Long temps nous tienne à table, et s'unisse au diner"[2]

In satiric irony Boileau is probably unequalled; and if the comparison between the two poems turned on this point, the advantage would lie with him. In truth, however, the just comparison is not a moral but an artistic one, viz. which poem is to be preferred as a heroic-comic composition? And here there can be no question as to the vast superiority of Pope. The true

[1] This grave confusion of dates by the learned canonist is delightfully characteristic of the irony running through *Le Lutrin*

[2] *Le Lutrin*, Chant iv.

genius of mock-heroic lies in travestying the serious epic, in bringing all the leading features of the epic—machinery, lofty incident, character, and style—to the exaltation of a trivial subject. The subject must no doubt have a moral bearing; but the satire ought not to be too apparent. Now in the construction of his poem Boileau, compared with Pope, works with a heavy hand. The abstractions—Discord, Sloth, etc.—who serve for his machines, are obvious puppets of the poet; on the other hand, Pope's Sylphs are as life-like and credible as the gods of Homer. The episodes in *Le Lutrin* are too often invented merely for the sake of introducing parodies from the classics, as in the case of the Barber and his Wife; but every incident in *The Rape of the Lock* leads up to the epic climax, and each of them prepares the way for a new and brilliant passage of description. Finally, while the serious conclusion of *Le Lutrin* is entirely out of keeping with its comic action, nothing can be more exquisite than the propriety with which *The Rape of the Lock* ends in the stellification of Belinda's hair. Pope showed his supreme judgment in the added touch of morality contributed by Clarissa's speech, which gives a suggestion of seriousness to the poem without destroying its lightness. Everything is of a piece in the structure, and the atmosphere of the whole composition seems to dance and sparkle with the rainbow-colours of the brilliant society it reflects, as in the truly beautiful lines describing the passage of Belinda on the Thames:—

But now secure the painted vessel glides,
The sun-beams trembling on the floating tides;
While melting music steals upon the sky,
And softened sounds along the water die;
Smooth flow the waves, the zephyrs gently play,
Belinda smiled, and all the world was gay:
All but the Sylph:—with careful thoughts oppressed,
Th' impending woe sat heavy on his breast.
He summons straight his denizens of air;
The lucid squadron round the sails repair;
Soft o'er the shrouds aerial whispers breathe,
That seemed but zephyrs to the train beneath.
Some to the sun their insect wings unfold,

Waft on the breeze, or sink in clouds of gold;
Transparent forms too fine for mortal sight,
Their fluid bodies half dissolved in light.
Loose to the wind their airy garments flew,
Thin glittering textures of the filmy dew,
Dipped in the richest tincture of the skies,
Where light disports in ever mingling dyes;
While every beam new transient colour flings,
Colours that change where'er they wave their wings.[1]

The position of Pope was now so strongly established by the fame of his *Pastorals*, *Windsor Forest*, *Essay on Criticism*, and *Rape of the Lock* that he felt himself able to advance from a firm base towards the great goal of his ambition, namely, securing for himself a position of honour and independence by means of literature. Since the year 1708 he had meditated a translation of Homer's *Iliad*. He had then sent, as a specimen of his capacity for the task, a translation of the episode of Glaucus and Sarpedon to his old friend Sir William Trumbull, who was delighted with it. Lord Lansdown, to whom he mentioned his design in 1713, was no less pleased with the sample of translation and promised him his zealous support in the undertaking. A subscription was accordingly set on foot, in which all parties, Whig and Tory, Protestant and Papist, so eagerly joined that Pope in 1714 had a list of 575 subscribers, among whom were the new King and the Prince of Wales. Fortunately for him the greater part of the names were collected before the convulsion of political and social life in England caused by the death of Queen Anne. Swift, whose attention to Pope's genius seems to have been first attracted by *Windsor Forest*, was more active than any one in promoting the subscription, thus establishing a lasting claim on the poet's gratitude, and laying the foundation of their long friendship and literary alliance. The subscription list, on the calculation that each volume was delivered and paid for, must have produced about £4000; and £2000 more was obtained as the result of a negotiation with Lintot the publisher, a total sum quite sufficient to satisfy Pope's most brilliant dreams of independence and distinction.

[1] *The Rape of the Lock*, canto ii. 47-68.

The effect of this great work on his character and fortune was striking. His translation was to be contained in six volumes, and, by dint of steady industry, the full task was completed in 1720, the event being celebrated in verse by Gay's *Welcome to Mr. Pope on his Return from Greece.* Yet the stages on the road to this goal of glory witnessed much suffering in the sensitive and self-conscious spirit, so long nourished on solitary musings in Windsor Forest. All that was irritable and suspicious in his nature was roused in 1715, when Tickell's rival translation of the first book of the *Iliad* appeared, almost contemporaneously with his own first volume. The rumour that Tickell's translation was in reality the work of Addison doubtless brought into being the first draft of the satire afterwards perfected in the character of Atticus. On all sides inhabitants of Grub Street, some envious of his success, others provoked by his sarcasms, the Dennises, the Oldmixons, the Gildons, and the Burnets, began to shoot at him with their poisoned arrows. His family left the retirement of the Forest and settled at Chiswick, where the poet, with his weak digestion and his perpetual headaches, was a more easy prey to the whirl and distraction of London society. Women helped to torture his imagination and self-love. The mocking wit of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, the haughty temper of Teresa Blount, the more tender sentiment excited by her sister Martha, all acted dramatically on his fancy, and combined to produce in him that tone of romantic, half-artificial passion and suffering which makes itself audible, through the mask of fiction, in the *Elegy on an Unfortunate Lady*, and the *Epistle of Eloisa to Abelard.*

After the completion of the Translation of the *Iliad*, a more sordid tendency towards the mere increase of fortune seems to have mingled with his nobler efforts. A readiness to undertake "hack-work" is apparent, alike in his edition of Shakespeare and in the mystification of the public over the translation of the *Odyssey*, for which he himself obtained nearly £4000. Such transactions exposed him to fresh libels from those who were moved

by envy of his unprecedented literary success. Theobald severely criticised his Shakespeare; anonymous complaints constantly appeared in the journals about the mean appearance of the *Odyssey* and Pope's supposed shabby treatment of his co-translators, Fenton and Broome. He was also charged with want of loyalty in consequence of a passage in the works of Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham, which he had consented to edit out of friendship, and had probably read so perfunctorily as not to notice certain words in favour of the Pretender.

All these experiences changed the current of Pope's ambition, and changed it consciously to himself. When in later years he wrote his autobiographical *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, he looked, in retrospect, on the romantic period of his poetical history, and presented the public with a portrait of his old self, which he doubtless conceived to be true:—

Soft were my numbers; who could take offence,
While pure description held the place of sense?
Like gentle Fanny's was my flowery theme,
A painted mistress or a purling stream.
Yet then did Gildon draw his venal quill;
I wished the man a dinner, and sate still.
Yet then did Dennis rave in furious fret;
I never answered—I was not in debt.
If want provoked, or madness made them print,
I waged no war with Bedlam or the Mint.

Now, however, in the midst of libels and accusations, he resolved to take up arms against his enemies; hence the success with which fortune had crowned his efforts may be said in a sense to have been the cause of his Wars with the Dunces. But he was determined that the public should regard him less as the avenger of his own personal injuries than as a moral champion, destined by Providence to rid society of the plague of envious scribblers by which it was infested. And to do this in an artistic fashion was no easy task.

Swift was the inspirer of *The Dunciad.* In 1726 the Dean of St. Patrick's had come over from Dublin, and had been for some time Pope's guest at Twickenham.

He brought with him a number of his compositions, which he desired to associate in a Miscellany with some of Pope's, and the two occupied themselves at Twickenham in forming the selection. Among Pope's papers was a satire called *Dulness*, written against those who had attacked him in a number of "libels" which he had collected and bound. He had formerly put this aside on Swift's own recommendation, and he now made a show of burning it, but the Dean snatched it from the fire, and urged him to complete it. Pope consented, and polished the satire into the first draft of *The Dunciad*. This, however, he did not at once publish, conceiving that the public would require a poem of such virulent personality to be justified by provocation more recent than the obsolete libels he had so carefully preserved. To attain his end he published in 1728 the *Bathos*, a fragment of the Scriblerus scheme, concerted as far back as 1713, with Swift and Arbuthnot, inserting in the general ironic treatise a chapter full of satiric allusions to his old enemies under the disguise of different animals, each of them being indicated by initials. The device was perfectly successful. The Dunces rushed out to retaliate, and the journals swarmed with fresh libels against the poet, who was thus enabled to appear before the world on 28th May 1728 as the defender of his own injured fame.

Even under such conditions, however, Pope proceeded with a caution amounting to timidity. *The Dunciad* was first published without either names or explanatory notes, and it was only after he had satisfied himself that the curiosity of the reading public was stronger than their reprobation that he ventured, in 1729, to issue the large edition containing the names of the victims, the Prolegomena, the notes of Scriblerus, etc. He further guarded himself against prosecution for libel by assigning the property in the poem to three peers of distinction, whom he thought the Dunces would be unlikely to attack. When it appeared safe to do so, the satire was transferred by these noblemen to the publisher, Gilliver.

The effect of *The Dunciad* was to annihilate for the

time the hack-writers of Grub Street, who, if their names were mentioned in it, could no longer obtain employment from the booksellers. But the war against Pope was still carried on by the more influential and fashionable of his enemies, particularly Lord Hervey and Lady M. W. Montagu, and it therefore became an object of prime importance to him, now that he had crushed what he maintained to be a public evil, to proclaim the loftiness and purity of his motives Out of *The Dunciad* accordingly sprang the series of autobiographical poems beginning with the *Imitations of Horace*, comprising the *Versifications of Donne*, and closing with the *Epistle to Arbuthnot*. The first of these (the *Imitation of Horace Satires*, Book ii. 1) was written at the suggestion of Bolingbroke in 1732, when Pope was recovering from an attack of illness occasioned by his grief at the recent death of Gay; the object of the *Imitation* was to show first that Pope's satire was employed in the cause of Virtue, and next that with him it was a weapon of self-defence. By its publication the bitterness of the conflict between the poet and his enemies was increased, while his sense of the greatness of his own calling, as the satiric champion of Virtue, was proportionately exalted. It is impossible to read his professions in the *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, written in 1735, without recognising in the midst of self-deception the glow of enthusiasm :—

> Not Fortune's worshipper, nor Fashion's fool,
> Not Lucre's madman, not Ambition's tool,
> Not proud, nor servile; be one poet's praise
> That, if he pleased, he pleased by manly ways,
>
> . . . .
>
> That not for Fame, but Virtue's better end,
> He stood the furious foe, the timid friend,
> The damning critic, half-approving wit,
> The coxcomb hit, or fearing to be hit,
> Laughed at the loss of friends he never had,
> The dull, the proud, the wicked, and the mad,
> The distant threats of vengeance on his head,
> The blow unfelt, the tear he never shed,

The tale revived, the lie so oft o'erthrown,
The imputed trash, the dulness not his own;
The morals blackened when the writings 'scape,
The libelled person, and the pictured shape;
Abuse on all he loved, or loved him, spread;
A friend in exile, or a parent dead;
The whisper that, to greatness still too near,
Perhaps yet vibrates on his Sovereign's ear—
Welcome for thee, fair Virtue! all the past:
For thee, fair Virtue, welcome e'en the last!

Closely connected with Pope's autobiographical compositions, yet essentially different in character, were his *Moral Essays* or *Ethical Epistles*, the political satires entitled *Seventeen Hundred and Thirty-Eight* and *1740*, and the fourth book of *The Dunciad.* The *Moral Essays*, originally called *Ethical Epistles*, were, as their name shows, didactic poems. They were intended to be integral parts of the scheme of the *Essay on Man*, of which I shall have to speak in another chapter; but they were full of modern illustrations, which gave them also a satiric character. The first of them to be published (30th December 1731) was that now printed as the fourth. It appeared with the title *On Taste*, and was evidently didactic in intention. The general theme, however, was illustrated by particular instances, and, in the character of Timon, certain touches were probably suggested by Canons, the house of John Bridges, Duke of Chandos; hence, as the intense personality of *The Dunciad* had led the public to believe that everything proceeding from Pope's pen was meant to reflect upon individuals, it was easy for the Dunces to spread the rumour that the entire essay was meant for a satire on the duke. Pope was much disturbed by these reports, and in consequence kept back the publication of the Epistle to Bathurst, now known as the Third Moral Essay, *On the Use of Riches*, for a full year after it was written. He allowed it to appear at last in January 1733, with many apprehensions,[1] which proved to be quite groundless; for, though it was full of bitter satire on Walpole and his supporters among

[1] Letter to Caryll of 14th December 1732.

the moneyed interest, most of the persons and things attacked were odious to the public. This essay distinctly raised the poet's reputation, and encouraged him to publish the Epistle to Cobham, *On the Characters of Men*—now the First Moral Essay—which appeared in February 1733. It has more systematic philosophy in it than any of the others, and less particular satire, being certainly, on the whole, the feeblest of the series. The characters it contains were, for the most part, obviously generalisations; and when, in 1735, Pope published the companion Epistle to Martha Blount, *On the Characters of Women*, he took the precaution to declare on his honour "that no one character is drawn from the life" in it. The public, always on the look-out for personality, were proportionately disappointed, and neglected the satire. Piqued by their indifference, Pope, in the octavo edition of the Epistle, inserted a note to v. 102:—

Between this and the former lines, and also in some following parts, a want of connection may be perceived, occasioned by the omission of certain examples and illustrations of the maxims laid down, which may put the reader in mind of what the author has said in his *Imitation of Horace*:—

> Publish the present age, but when the text
> Is vice too high, reserve it for the next.

Pope had written to Swift on the 16th of February 1733:—"Your lady friend [Martha Blount] is *semper eadem*, and I have written an Epistle to her on that qualification in a female character; which is thought by my chief critic in your absence [Bolingbroke] to be my *chef-d'œuvre*; but it cannot be printed perfectly in an age so sore of satire, and so willing to misapply characters." And accordingly, when the essay *On the Characters of Women* first appeared, it was without the characters of Chloe, Philomede, and Atossa.

Of the same class with the *Moral Essays* is *The New Dunciad*, published in 1742; but it contains touches that connect it with Pope's political satires, which were in themselves inspired by a different range of motives.

In his early days, while he was climbing to a position of independence, the poet had studiously abstained from connecting himself with any political party—a matter of no great difficulty, as he was debarred by his religion from taking any direct part in political action. At a later period, in his autobiographical poems, he loved to represent this detachment from party as the effect of philosophy:—

> In moderation placing all my glory,
> While Tories call me Whig, and Whigs a Tory.[1]

Yet at the time when he wrote these words he was an active supporter of the Parliamentary Opposition. That Opposition had been formed by the genius of Bolingbroke, who, though he owed his amnesty to Walpole, hated the Minister because he had not restored him to his political privileges. He carried on his intrigues against the Government mainly in the press, his chief organ being *The Craftsman*, founded by him in December 1726. Under the banner raised by Bolingbroke were united the Jacobites, the Hanoverian Tories, and the discontented Whigs, who were jealous of Walpole's practical monopoly of power. For a short time in 1733 this motley Opposition seemed on the point of succeeding, and inflicted on Walpole in that year a serious defeat over his Excise Bill. But when Bolingbroke tried to push home his advantage in a motion by Sir William Wyndham to repeal the Septennial Act, the weakness of his own following and the strength of Walpole's became apparent; and, recognising his failure, he abandoned politics, and in 1735 retired to France.

In Bolingbroke's long political campaign Pope found something thoroughly congenial to his temper. It roused, in the first place, his personal sympathies. Not that he had any rancour against Walpole, whom in private company he liked, and to whom he was under some obligation; but he detested the moneyed interest, who were at once the chief supporters of the Minister and the

[1] *Imitation of Horace Satires*, ii. 1. 67-68.

great enemies of the Roman Catholics; and he was influenced by the fierce animosity with which his disappointed friends, particularly Swift and Bolingbroke, regarded the favourites of the English Court. But, in the second place, the whole attitude of *The Craftsman* towards its opponents delighted his imagination, because it was so like his own. The claim to a monopoly of Virtue and Patriotism, the sense of superiority produced by the contemplation of the Corruption without him, was the vantage-ground from which he had himself assaulted the Dunces. Moreover, his vanity was flattered by the rhetorical liberty with which he found himself able to reflect on the weaknesses of kings and queens. At the outset he contented himself with taking the moneyed interest and the courtiers as vicious illustrations of his moral texts; and his satire has, for the most part, condensed itself in epigrammatic couplets charged with secret history, such as the one aimed at Walpole's mistress:—

> Ask you why Phryne the whole auction buys?
> Phryne foresees a General Excise.[1]

But after Bolingbroke's retirement to France, when Pope's villa at Twickenham became the rallying-point of the Opposition, the poet's tone became loftier. All the accusations against Walpole, the corruption of his domestic policy, the cowardice of his foreign policy, his encouragement of Grub Street, his servility to Spain, are translated into poetical rhetoric, and with these attacks on the Minister are blended many oblique reflections on the morals and manners of still more exalted persons. The artfulness of Pope's irony reaches the highest degree of finish in his *Imitation of Horace's Epistle to Augustus* (1737):—

> Oh, could I mount on the Mæonian wing
> Your arms, your action, your repose to sing!
> What seas you traversed, and what fields you fought,
> Your country's peace how oft, how dearly, bought!
> How barb'rous rage subsided at your word,
> How nations wondered while they dropped the sword!

[1] *Moral Essay*, v 119-120

How, when you nodded, over land and deep
Peace stole her wing, and wrapped the world in sleep;
Till earth's extremes your mediation own,
And Asia's tyrants trembled on their throne.
But verse, alas! your Majesty disdains,
And I'm not used to panegyric strains.
The zeal of fools offends at any time,
But most of all the zeal of fools in rhyme.
Besides a fate attends on all I write,
And when I aim at praise, they say I bite.

In *Seventeen Hundred and Thirty-Eight* his conception of the public mission of his satire raised him to heights of eloquence beyond anything he had yet reached. He had imagined himself in the *Epistle to Arbuthnot* as the martyr of Virtue; he now claimed to be her prophet:—

O sacred weapon! left for truth's defence,
Sole dread of folly, vice, and indolence!
To all but heaven-directed hands denied!
The Muse may give thee, but the gods must guide.
Reverent I touch thee, but with honest zeal,
To rouse the watchmen of the public weal,
To Virtue's work provoke the tardy hall,
And goad the prelate slumbering in his stall.
Ye tinsel insects! whom a Court maintains,
That counts your beauties only by your stains;
Spin all your cobwebs o'er the eye of day!
The Muse's wing shall brush you all away;
All his grace preaches, all his lordship sings,
All that makes saints of queens and gods of kings;
All, all but truth drops still-born from the press,
Like the last gazette or the last address.

The same brilliant satiric imagination, contemplating the wide scene of political affairs, is visible as late as 1742 in *The New Dunciad*, and finds sublime expression in the gigantic yawn of the goddess with which the poem closes. But hardly had this poem appeared, when unfortunately, but characteristically, a personal quarrel turned Pope's ideas into an entirely different channel, inducing him to recast the whole framework of *The Dunciad*, with fatal effects to its artistic form. He dethroned his first hero, and replaced him by the Poet Laureate, a man of totally different character, with the

result that, as Johnson says, "he has depraved his poem by giving to Cibber the old books, the cold pedantry and sluggish pertinacity of Theobald." *The Dunciad* in its final form appeared in 1743; it was the last work of the poet, who died on the 30th of May 1744.

In this survey of the poetical career of Pope, the reader may perhaps be struck with the remarkable analogy it presents—in its contrast as well as in its likeness—to the contemporary change in the English Constitution and to the parallel ascendency of Walpole in politics. Till the rise of the younger Pitt, no English Minister since the Revolution could compare with Walpole in the influence he exercised over the destinies of the nation. Through the most critical period of two reigns he enjoyed the almost boundless confidence of his Sovereign. One by one his chief rivals, Stanhope, Compton, Carteret, Townshend, yielded to his superiority. The efforts of his brilliant opponents, Bolingbroke and Pulteney, were unable to shake his authority. Out of widespread ruin and distress, caused by the collapse of the South Sea Scheme, he brought the finances of the country into a state of soundness and prosperity. He was the one statesman that the circumstances of the time required.

The steady aim of his government was the completion, by the firm establishment on the throne of the House of Brunswick, of the Whig fabric of Civil Liberty, begun in the Revolution of 1688. For the success of his policy the first necessity was Peace. All things, in Walpole's mind, were secondary to this master object. It was his business, in the first place, to preserve the goodwill of the towns, where the Whig element generally prevailed, by finding outlets for their commerce, but also to reconcile the minds of the country gentlemen, whose feelings he understood so well, to the change of dynasty, by lightening their burden of taxation, and by maintaining the political ascendency of the National Church. With such sagacity did he pursue his ends that, when the last Stuart rising took place, the general system of society, in spite of the

superficial panic caused by the appearance of the Pretender, remained unshaken.

Yet the end was not secured without grievous sacrifices and suppressions. Walpole felt no scruples about the means he employed. In his hands Parliamentary corruption was carried to an unexampled pitch of venality. The character of English gentlemen and statesmen was thereby degraded, and the whole tone of society was injured by the scorn cast on the traditions of chivalry, and on the principle of patriotism as a practical factor in political life. However necessary in the cause of domestic prosperity it might have been to preserve peace, it was humiliating to a nation which had borne a leading part in the elevated European policy of William III., to see its interests abroad treated on the tradesman-like principles professed by the government of Walpole.

Like Walpole in the sphere of politics, Pope was the one predominant figure in the poetry of the first half of the eighteenth century: since the appearance of *The Rape of the Lock*, his superiority over all rival writers in metre was unquestioned. As in the conduct of affairs it was Walpole's prime aim to make good the constitutional settlement effected by the Revolution of 1688, without any breach in the continuity of English history, so did Pope strive in poetry, out of imaginative chaos, to bring form and order into the region of taste, while still preserving the traditions of the past. And as Walpole carried out his policy on the principle, *Quieta non movere*, by his sagacious financial measures and his careful preservation of peace, so were all Pope's artistic efforts concentrated on developing the classic movement that had descended to him as a legacy from Dryden. In his youthful days it was his ambition to adapt the heroic couplet, by means of classical forms, to express the romantic ideas familiar to him in the poetry of earlier generations. But as he grew older, he felt more and more the pressure of the social atmosphere about him, and the change of thought in a community in which mediæval traditions were always giving way before the

advance of civil ideas. Hence, during the latter part of his life, his poetry became almost exclusively ethical, and he himself makes it a matter of boasting

> That not in Fancy's maze he wandered long,
> But stooped to Truth and moralised his song.

In executing this design, he gave to the couplet, as inherited from Dryden, a polish and balance which perfected its capacities of artistic expression, perhaps at the expense of its native vigour.

He was doubtless right in following the bent of his genius as well as the tendencies of his age; and it is on a false principle of criticism that Warton, and those who think with him, blame his poetry on account of the absence from it of qualities which they find in other poets. Comparing the crude classicism of form in the *Pastorals* and *The Messiah* with the perfect command of colloquial idiom displayed in the *Moral Essays*, in the *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, and in the *Imitations of Horace*, we can hardly fail to come to the conclusion that the influence of the Classical Renaissance on Pope's style was not brought to its artistic climax till towards the close of his life. Still it is unquestionable that this process of development involved a necessary sacrifice, nor could any contemporary lover of old English poetry have seen without concern the exhaustion of springs of romantic imagination which had found nourishment in the national genius of the seventeenth century. Pope himself had no lyric gift; but the complete disappearance, during the first half of the eighteenth century, of the poetical freedom and impulse which had inspired so much English verse up to the time of *Alexander's Feast*, suggests that general causes were at work beyond the operation of individual genius. And the simplest explanation of the phenomenon seems to me to be that the circumstances which had brought about the Revolution of 1688 had, for the time being, caused the temporary suppression of certain mediæval elements in the national life, which did not rise again into vigour till they found renewed poetical expression in the lyrics of Gray and Collins.

CHAPTER VII

DEVELOPMENT OF THE ETHICAL SCHOOL OF POPE

THOMAS PARNELL; RICHARD SAVAGE; SAMUEL JOHNSON; OLIVER GOLDSMITH; WILLIAM FALCONER

COWPER, describing the influence of Pope on English Poetry, says of him, in his *Table Talk*, that

> He (his musical finesse was such,
> So nice his ear, so delicate his touch)
> Made poetry a mere mechanic art,
> And every warbler has the tune by heart.

How wide of the mark this judgment is may be inferred from the names of the five poets which head the present chapter. All of them were beyond question men of genius; all of them were, in different degrees, disciples of Pope; all of them followed in his footsteps as regards the observance of the heroic couplet; and yet the poetry of each is distinguished from that of the others by the strongest individuality of character, the most emphatic variety of style.

Cowper's criticism is, in fact, prejudiced, and wanting in historical perspective. He had little sympathy with Pope, who used a metrical instrument ill qualified to express the feelings by which Cowper himself was moved, and he therefore undervalued the great Georgian satirist as a representative of national thought. It is unphilosophical to believe that a single poet can turn the art of poetry into any channel that he will by his own genius: the greatest artists are those who best understand the

conflict of tendencies in their own age, and who, though they rise above it into the region of universal truth, are moved by it to reflect in their work its particular form and character.

That there was an inevitable trend of the public taste through the eighteenth century towards satiric or didactic poetry is proved, as I showed in the last chapter, by the whole development of Pope's genius. But this view is still further confirmed by the fact that, before Pope began to develop his latest style, and for a considerable time after his death, there was a continued tendency to use the heroic couplet in his manner, as a vehicle for subjects of living social interest. An ethical school of writers, in fact, modelling their metrical style, with different degrees of closeness, on Pope, grew up spontaneously after the Revolution of 1688, of whom the first was Thomas Parnell.

This poet, though of English descent, was born in Dublin in 1679, and was educated first in a school kept there by Dr. Jones. At the age of thirteen he was admitted into Trinity College, Dublin, where he took his degree of M.A. when only twenty-one. In the same year (1700) he was ordained deacon, while still under the canonical age; and in 1705, having taken priest's orders, was appointed Archdeacon of Clogher. Though his father had been an adherent of Cromwell, Parnell was among the Whigs who attached themselves to the party of Harley and Bolingbroke. He seems to have paid his first visit to England about 1706, but he did not come into prominent notice till Swift introduced him to Harley, then Lord Oxford, in 1712. Some time in that year he lost his wife (Anne Minchin), to whom he was married in 1705, and to whom he was devotedly attached. Swift's references to Parnell in his *Journal to Stella* are frequent; he tried, but without success, to obtain for him preferment in England, where most of the Archdeacon's time was apparently spent in literary society. Parnell was one of the leading members of the Scriblerus Club, and his classical learning was of great use to Pope, who frequently consulted him about his Translation of the *Iliad*, to which

Parnell contributed the Preface. The two became great friends: they went as companions to Bath: Parnell was entertained at Binfield by Pope: they were together at Letcombe in the last days of the Tory Administration. When the latter was destroyed by the death of the Queen, and all hopes of preferment were consequently at an end, the Archdeacon returned to his living in Ireland, and wrote thence his *Epistle to Pope*, which expresses characteristically his appreciation of the social pleasures he had left behind him. He seems to have paid only one more visit to England, bringing with him a number of unpublished poems, which he left for correction in the hands of Pope. On his journey home to his living at Finglass, to which he had been presented in 1716, he was taken ill at Chester, and died there in July 1717. Pope published his Poems in 1721, dedicating them, in famous verses, to the Earl of Oxford. It is probable that they owe something of their polish to his corrections, for he says, in one of his letters, that they were only "a small part of what he [Parnell] left behind him, and that he [Pope] would not make it worse by enlarging it."[1]

Interesting appreciations of Parnell's work have been left by Goldsmith and Campbell, both of whom belonged to the school of which Parnell was the earliest representative. The former says:—

He appears to me to be the last of that great school that had modelled itself on the ancients and taught English poetry to resemble what the generality of mankind have allowed to excel. A studious and correct observer of antiquity, he set himself to consider nature with the lights it lent him, and he found the more aid he borrowed from the one, the more delightfully he resembled the other. To copy nature is a task the most bungling workman is able to execute; to select such parts as contribute to delight is reserved only for those whom accident has blessed with uncommon talents, or such as have read the ancients with indefatigable industry. Parnell is ever happy in the selection of his images, and scrupulously careful in the choice of his subjects. His productions bear no resemblance to those tawdry things

[1] Pope to Jervas. Letter of December 12, 1718.

which it has for some time been the fashion to admire; in writing which the poet sits down without any plan, and heaps up splendid images without any selection; when the reader grows dizzy with praise and admiration, and yet soon grows weary he can scarcely tell why. Our poet on the contrary gives out his beauties with a more sparing hand. He is still carrying the reader forward, and just gives him refreshment sufficient to support him to his journey's end. At the end of his course, the reader regrets that his way has been so short, he wonders that it gave him so little trouble, and so resolves to go the journey over again."[1]

To which Campbell adds, with much felicity:—

The compass of Parnell's poetry is not extensive, but its tone is peculiarly delightful; not from mere correctness of expression, to which some critics have stinted its praises, but from the graceful and reserved sensibility that accompanied his polished phraseology. The *curiosa felicitas*, the studied happiness of his diction, does not spoil its simplicity. His poetry is like a flower that has been trained and planted by the skill of the gardener, but which preserves in its cultured state the natural fragrance of its wilder air.[2]

It will be gathered from these criticisms—and we have to remember that Goldsmith's exaltation of Parnell's merits is partly inspired by his dislike for the opposite style of Gray—that the characteristics of Parnell's genius are choiceness and purity, rather than force and elevation. He appears to have aimed at a mean between the literary classicalism of Pope and the colloquial idiom of Prior and Swift. His subjects were generally suggested to him by something which he had read, and which he sought to reproduce with an exquisiteness resembling that of the Greek Anthologists His reading lay largely in the by-paths of literature, as may be seen by his translations of such poems as the *Pervigilium Veneris*, the *Batrachomyomachia*, and by many paraphrases from the mediæval Latin and the modern French. In decorating these selected themes, the chief qualities he displays are a gay and humorous fancy, joined to a fastidious elegance of taste. Most of his more important poems are pervaded

[1] *Life of Thomas Parnell* (1770)

[2] *Essay on English Poetry.*

by an air of moral reflection, which prompted the point of Johnson's graceful epitaph :—

Hic requiescit Thomas Parnell S.T.P.
Qui, Sacerdos pariter et Poeta,
Utrasque partes ita implevit,
Ut neque Sacerdoti suavitas Poetae,
Nec Poetae Sacerdotis sanctitas, deesset.

Goldsmith also asks—

What heart but feels his sweetly moral lay,
That leads to truth through pleasure's flowery way?

Two or three passages will serve to illustrate what has been said of the graceful ease, the moral tone, and the familiar elegance of Parnell's style. The first is the opening of his most popular poem, *The Hermit*[1] :—

Far in a wild, unknown to public view,
From youth to age a reverend hermit grew.
The moss his bed, the cave his humble cell,
His food the fruits, his drink the crystal well:
Remote from man, with God he passed the days,
Prayer all his business, all his pleasure praise.

A life so sacréd, such serene repose,
Seemed heaven itself, till one suggestion rose;
That vice should triumph, virtue vice obey,
This sprung some doubt of Providence's sway:
His hopes no more a certain prospect boast,
And all the tenour of his soul is lost.

So, when a smooth expanse receives imprest
Calm nature's image on its watery breast,
Down bend the banks, the trees depending grow,
And skies beneath with answering colour glow:
But if a stone the gentle scene divide,
Swift ruffling circles curl on every side,
And glimmering fragments of a broken sun,
Banks, trees, and skies, in thick disorder run.

The following is from *An Elegy, To an Old Beauty*:[2] the last line of the quotation has become proverbial :—

[1] Adapted from *Gesta Romanorum*, Cap. 80.

[2] The idea of this poem seems to have been suggested by Horace's *Ode* (iii. 15) beginning "Uxor pauperis Ibyci."

But thou since nature bids the world resign;
'Tis now thy daughter's daughter's time to shine.
With more address, or such as pleases more,
She runs her female exercises o'er,
Unfurls or closes, raps or turns the fan,
And smiles or blushes at the creature man.
With quicker life, as gilded coaches pass,
In sideling courtesy she drops the glass.
With better strength, on visit days, she bears
To mount her fifty flights of ample stairs.
Her mien, her shape, her temper, eyes, and tongue,
Are sure to conquer—for the rogue is young;
And all that's madly wild, or oddly gay,
We call it only pretty Fanny's way.

In the closing lines of the *Epistle to Pope* one couplet especially illustrates the choice simplicity that was so congenial to Goldsmith in Parnell's poetry.—

This to my friend—and when a friend inspires,
My silent harp its master's hand requires,
Shakes off its dust, and makes these rocks resound,
For fortune placed me in unfertile ground;
Far from the joys that with my soul agree,
From wit, from learning—far, oh far from thee!
Here moss-grown trees expand the smallest leaf,
Here half an acre's corn is half a sheaf;
Here hills with naked heads the tempest meet,
Rocks at their side, and torrents at their feet,
Or lazy lakes, unconscious of a flood,
Whose dull brown Naiads ever sleep in mud.

Yet here content can dwell and learned ease,
A friend delight me and an author please.
Even here I sing, while Pope supplies the theme;
Show my own love, though not increase his fame

At the same time it is just to add that Parnell, though he pointed the way to Goldsmith, did not always attain to the correct simplicity of his successor. In a style where the minuteness of the subject seems to demand an exact felicity in the choice of words, he often disappoints expectation by leaving his workmanship in the rough. This is especially the case in his descriptive passages, where he is satisfied with the merest convention. For example:—

The chirping birds from all the compass rove;
To tempt the tuneful echoes of the grove;
High sunny summits, deeply shaded dales,
Thick mossy banks, and flowery winding vales,
With various prospect gratify the sight,
And scatter fix'd attention in delight.[1]

His imagery is frequently indistinct:—

There stands a slender fern's aspiring shade,
Whose answering *branches*, regularly laid,
Put forth their answering *boughs*, and proudly rise,
Three stories upwards in the nether *skies*.[2]

He uses intransitively transitive verbs, thus producing ambiguity:—

Joy to my soul! I feel the goddess nigh,
The face of nature *cheers* as well as I.[3]

and—

But beauty gone, 'tis easier to be wise;
As harpers *better*, by the loss of eyes.[4]

His metaphors do not always convey his meaning exactly: for example:—

Her hardy face *repels* the tanning wind.[5]

The face cannot properly be said to *repel* the wind, though the complexion may; and he could have more correctly written either

Her hardy face defies the tanning wind,

or

Her rosy tint repels the tanning wind.

Hibernian pronunciation is often amusingly apparent in his rhymes; we find among numerous examples:—

Perhaps 'tis either, as the ladies *please*;
I wave the contest, and commence the lays.[6]

She, proud to rule, yet strangely framed to *tease*,
Neglects his offer while her airs she plays.[7]

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1 *Health; An Eclogue.*
2 *The Flies; An Eclogue.*
3 *Health.*
4 *An Elegy, To an Old Beauty.*
5 *Health.*
6 *Hesiod.*
7 *Ibid.*

And, lost in thought, no more *perceived*
The branches whisper as they waved.[1]

Parnell's poetical characteristics are strikingly contrasted with those of Richard Savage, who was, nevertheless, indebted to him for some of his leading ideas. It is difficult to say whether this remarkable man was the author or, as he himself asserted, the victim, of the frauds with which his name is associated. According to his own account, he was identical with the infant baptized on the 18th of January 1696-97 at St. Andrew's, Holborn, under the name of Richard Smith, who was undoubtedly the son of Earl Rivers and the Countess of Macclesfield. He states that he was educated at a grammar school near St. Albans, by the care of Lady Mason (mother of Lady Macclesfield) and a Mrs. Lloyd, whom he asserted to be his godmother; that he was afterwards apprenticed by his mother to a cobbler; that on the death of his nurse, to whose charge he had been committed, and who had brought him up as her son, he discovered his true parentage when looking through her papers. He urged his claim to recognition on his mother in 1718.

Against this we have to place the facts, that Savage's story rests on his own unsupported evidence; that he never claimed the legacy which he declared had been left him by Mrs. Lloyd; that the latter is not named as godmother of Richard Smith in the Registry of St. Andrew's, Holborn; that Savage made no mention of Newdigate Ousley, who was the actual godfather of Richard Smith; that Lady Mason was dead before he advanced his claim; and that no trace of Mrs. Lloyd has been discovered.

On the other hand, Savage's story was published on no less than five separate occasions during Lady Macclesfield's lifetime—in Curll's *Poetical Register* of 1719, in Aaron Hill's *Plain Dealer*, 1724; in the anonymous *Life of Savage*, 1727; in Savage's Preface to the second edition of his *Miscellanies*, 1728; in Johnson's *Life*, 1744

[1] *Hymn to Contentment.*

—and it remained uncontradicted. Assuming that, up to 1728, Lady Macclesfield might have shrunk from reviving the recollection of her scandalous intercourse with Lord Rivers, yet in that year the charges of hard-hearted conduct to her alleged son were put forward in a shape that should have caused her, if she could, to deny their truth. Savage had just been condemned to death for murder committed without premeditation by him in a midnight brawl; an appeal to the Queen to procure for him a pardon had, it was said, been rendered ineffectual by the intervention of the ex-Countess of Macclesfield (then Mrs. Brett); and his pardon had been finally granted only through the urgency of the Countess of Hertford, who explained to the Queen the facts of his history. On his release Savage, resolved to keep terms no longer with his unnatural parent, published his powerful satire, *The Bastard*, which he dedicated to his mother. The poem had the effect of raising a storm of indignation against the latter, and, supposing Savage's story to have been entirely without foundation, it should have been easy for Mrs. Brett to expose him, by tracing the history of her real child, as well as the falsehood of Savage's other allegations. Instead of taking this course, her nephew, Lord Tyrconnel, received Savage into his house, and for some years paid him an annuity of £200. With him the poet quarrelled in 1735, and was then left without any regular means of support; but, as his story was widely believed, he was seldom at a loss to obtain assistance, though this was often rendered of little avail to him in consequence of his wasteful habits.

While Queen Caroline lived she paid him, without fail, £50 a year for an ode which he wrote in her honour on each of her birthdays. Mrs. Oldfield, the celebrated actress, was another of his generous supporters; and, after the Queen's death in 1738, a number of bountiful friends, of whom the chief was Pope, combined to provide him with a competent allowance. These saw that it was necessary for him to live out of London, and with difficulty persuaded him in 1739 to retire to Swansea.

Here he resided for more than a year, but then, growing weary of the place, removed to Bristol, where he was hospitably entertained by the leading inhabitants, and supported till their kindness was exhausted by his pertinacious dissipation. After about two years' forbearance one of them caused him to be arrested for debt, and he was imprisoned in the Bristol Newgate, where he wrote his satire called *London and Bristol Delineated.* All his benefactors had now fallen away from him, with the exception of Pope, and even he was alienated, when convinced, on what seemed to be good evidence, that Savage had repaid his generosity with a libel. The latter, being charged with this ingratitude, indignantly denied it, and is said to have taken the accusation so much to heart that he fell ill in prison and died there on the 1st of August 1743.

Savage began his literary life by writing for the stage. His first play, *Woman's a Riddle*, though unsuccessful, procured for him the friendship of Steele and the generous interest of Wilks, the actor. His *Love in a Veil* was produced in 1718, and his tragedy, *Sir Thomas Overbury*, in 1723. Neither of these dramas succeeded, and whatever in his later work bears the stamp of his undoubted genius is contained in his two poems, *The Bastard* and *The Wanderer*, both of which depend for their main effect upon the poetical moralisation of his own character and misfortunes

The Bastard was published in 1728.[1] It is a satire, powerful alike in poignancy and pathos, and is also a panegyric on the Queen. He begins with an ironic exaltation of the advantages of illegitimate birth:—

> What had I lost, if conjugally kind,
> By nature hating, yet by vows confined,
> Untaught the matrimonial bounds to slight,
> And coldly conscious of a husband's right,

[1] [illegible]

You had faint-drawn me with a form alone,
A lawful lump of life, by force your own!
Then, while your backward will retrenched desire,
And unconcurring spirits lent no fire,
I had been born your dull domestic heir,
Lord of your life, and motive of your care;
Perhaps been poorly rich, and meanly great,
The slave of pomp, a cypher in the state,
Lordly neglectful of a worth unknown,
And slumbering in a seat, by chance my own.

But from this youthful delusion he was speedily recovered, he says, by cruel experience:—

Thus unprophetic, lately misinspired,
I sang: gay flattering hope my fancy fired.
Inly secure, through conscious scorn of ill,
Nor taught by wisdom how to balance will,
Rashly deceived, I saw no pits to shun,
But thought to purpose and to act were one;
Heedless what pointed cares pervert his way,
Whom caution arms not, and whom woes betray.
But now exposed, and shrinking from distress,
I fly to shelter while the tempests press;
My Muse to grief resigns the varying tone,
The raptures languish and the numbers groan.

He speaks with horror and remorse of his crime, and then concludes with a skilful reference to the clemency of the Queen:—

O fate of late repentance! always vain:
Thy remedies but lull undying pain.
When shall my hope find rest? No mother's care
Shielded my infant innocence with prayer:
No father's guardian hand my youth maintained,
Called forth my virtues or from vice restrained.
Is it not thine to snatch some pow'rful arm,
First to advance, then screen from future harm?
I am returned from death to live in pain!
Or would Imperial Pity save in vain?
Distrust it not—What blame can Mercy find,
Which gives at once a life, and rears a mind?
Mother, miscalled, farewell! of soul severe,
This sad reflection yet may force one tear:
All I was wretched by to you I owed;
Alone from strangers every comfort flowed.

Lost to the life you gave, your son no more,
And now adopted who was doomed before,
New-born, I may a nobler mother claim,
But dare not whisper her immortal name;
Supremely lovely and supremely great,
Majestic mother of a kneeling State!
Queen of a People's heart, who ne'er before
Agreed—yet now with one consent adore!
One contest yet remains in this desire,
Who most shall give applause, where all admire.

In *The Wanderer* Savage makes his own experience the groundwork of more extended moralisation. Of this poem Johnson says:—

It has been generally objected to *The Wanderer* that the disposition of the parts is irregular; that the design is obscure, and the plan perplexed; that the images, however beautiful, succeed each other without order, and that the whole performance is not so much a regular fabric, as a heap of shining materials thrown together by accident, which strikes rather with the solemn magnificence of a stupendous ruin, than the elegant grandeur of a finished pile.

This criticism is universal, and therefore it is reasonable to believe it at least in a great degree just; but Mr. Savage was always of a contrary opinion, and thought his drift could only be missed *by negligence or stupidity, and that the whole plan was regular*, and the parts distinct.[1]

The justice of the general censure is undeniable: a more ill-compacted poem than *The Wanderer* it would be difficult to find. Beginning with a dedicatory address to Lord Tyrconnel, the poet passes on to describe his general purpose:—

O'er ample Nature I extend my views;
Nature to rural scenes invites the Muse.
She flies all public care, all venal strife,
To try the still compared with active life;
To prove by these the sons of men may owe
The fruits of bliss to bursting clouds of woe,
That e'en calamity, by thought refined,
Inspirits and adorns the thinking mind.

He then calls on Contemplation to carry him first to the Arctic Regions, and afterwards to a summer climate,

[1] *Lives of the Poets* Savage.

where from some point he may have a bird's-eye view of things. A long and minute description of the Polar world follows, and we learn casually that the Vision which arises out of this is allegorical.[1] In his vision the Poet meets a Hermit who conducts him to his cell, shows him what triumphs industry and art can obtain over Nature, even in the midst of barrenness, and afterwards tells him the story of his own unhappiness. The pair then leave the cell, and descend the mountain towards a city, where, the Hermit informs his companion, a gifted but ill-appreciated Bard resides, given up to the worship of the Muse. Once more we have a glimpse of the moral of the poem :—

> Now rapt, now more than man, I see him climb,
> To view this speck of earth from worlds sublime!
> I see him now o'er Nature's works preside!
> How clear the vision! and the scene how wide!
> Let some a name by adulation raise,
> Or scandal, meaner than a venal praise!
> My muse (he cries), a nobler prospect view!
> Through fancy's wilds some moral's point pursue!
> From dark deception clear-drawn truths display,
> As from black chaos rose resplendent day!
> Awake compassion, and bid terror rise!
> Bid humble sorrows strike superior eyes!
> So pampered power, unconscious of distress,
> May see, be moved, and, being moved, redress.[2]

After this the Poet is transported, without any notice, to the Southern hemisphere, and having entered a seaside grotto, for the purpose of meditation, becomes suddenly aware of the arrival of a meteor which, to his surprise, turns out to be his friend the Hermit. Leaving the grotto, the Poet and the Hermit meet with a mendicant, whom the Poet relieves with "a little copper alms," and who is

[1] O Contemplation teach me to explore
From Britain far remote some distant shore!
From Sleep a dream distinct and lively claim;
Clear let the vision strike the moral's aim!
It comes! I feel it o'er my soul serene!
Still morn begins, and frost retains the scene.
The Wanderer, Canto I.

[2] *Ibid.* Canto iii.

shortly afterwards transformed, in his turn, into the Bard of the Polar Regions, now become an immortal, and qualified to look down with disdain on the great who had neglected him in his lifetime:—

> Then thus the Bard—Are these the gifts of State?
> Gifts unreceived? These? Ye ungenerous Great!
> How was I treated when in life forlorn?
>
> . . . .
>
> Did I contemporary authors wrong,
> And deem their worth but as they prized my song?
> Did I soothe vice, or venal strokes betray,
> In the low-purposed, loud, polemic fray?
> Did e'er my verse immodest warmth contain,
> Or, once licentious, heavenly truths profane?
> Never! and yet when envy sunk my name,
> Who called my shadowed merit into fame?
> When undeserved a prison's grate I saw,
> What hand redeemed me from the wrested law?
> Who clothed me naked, or when hungry fed?
> Why crushed the living, why extolled the dead?
> But foreign languages adopt my lays,
> And distant nations shame you into praise.
> Why should unrelished wit these honours cause?
> Custom, not knowledge, dictates your applause:
> Or think you thus a self-renown to raise,
> And mingle your vain-glories with my bays?
> Be yours the mouldering tomb! Be mine the lay
> Immortal!—Thus he scoffs the pomp away[1]

It is now time for the Hermit also to disclose himself in his real nature:—

> Lo!
> His raiment lightens, and his features glow!
> In shady ringlets falls a length of hair,
> Embloomed his aspect shines, enlarged his air.
> Mild from his eyes enlivening glories beam,
> Mild on his brow sits majesty supreme;
> Bright plumes of every dye that round him flow
> Vest, robe, and wings, in varied lustre show[2]

He has in fact become a seraph, sent from heaven to reveal to the Poet the true moral of all that he has seen; and to solve the difficulties with which he was at first perplexed:—

[1] *The Wanderer*, Canto v. [2] *Ibid.* Canto v.

Know then, if ills oblige thee to retire,
Those ills solemnity of thought inspire.
Did not the soul abroad for objects roam,
Whence could she learn to call ideas home?
Justly to know thyself, peruse mankind;
To know thy God, paint nature on thy mind:
Without such science of the worldly scene,
What is retirement?—empty pride or spleen;
But with it—wisdom. Then shall cares refine,
Rendered by contemplation half-divine.
Trust not the frantic or mysterious guide,
Nor stoop a captive to the schoolman's pride.
On Nature's wonders fix alone thy zeal!
They dim not reason when they truth reveal:
So shall religion in thy heart endure,
From all traditionary falsehood pure;
So life make death familiar to thy eye;
So shalt thou live, as thou may'st learn to die;
And though thou view'st thy worst oppressor thrive,
From transient woe immortal bliss derive.[1]

The reader will probably be able to divine, by the striking extracts I have made from this incoherent poem, the reasons for Savage's blindness to its imperfections. He had set himself to solve the same moral problem as Parnell in his *Hermit*, namely, "Why vice should triumph, virtue vice obey"; but the problem constantly presented itself to him in the shape of his own misfortunes. Full of ardent thought, he lacked poetic invention, and he took the suggestion for the form, and much of the matter, of his poem from Parnell, himself a borrower. This will be apparent to any one who compares the transformation scene at the close of *The Hermit* with that at the end of *The Wanderer*. But Parnell's poem was too short to serve as a model for all that Savage desired to express: the latter was ambitious also of emulating the descriptive passages in Thomson's *Winter*, which had recently appeared; and the two styles together, blended with his own animated rhetoric, make up the strange labyrinth of *The Wanderer*.

Compared with the work of Thomson in *The Seasons*, the landscape painting in *The Wanderer* is of little value: the heroic couplet, which, for general purposes, suited the

[1] *The Wanderer*, Canto v.

genius of Savage, was not the best vehicle for description. Compared again with Parnell's his verse seems careless and slovenly: he far surpasses that poet, however, in strength and depth of feeling. To "solemnity of thought" he may unquestionably lay claim: it is his most characteristic quality; and the student of *London* and *The Vanity of Human Wishes* can hardly fail to perceive that much of the weighty moral style in Johnson's poetry is inspired, or at least stimulated, by the example of Savage.

Like Savage, Johnson struggled into eminence through poverty, hunger, and various circumstances of adversity, which helped to form in his mind a pessimist view of life, and left traces of themselves in many of the ethical reflections in his poetry. Almost all of his verse was written before the receipt of his pension in 1762; and I shall therefore briefly sketch only up to this point the incidents of a career which must be familiar to every reader. Samuel Johnson was the son of Michael Johnson, a bookseller in Lichfield, where Samuel was born on the 7th of September 1709 From his father he inherited a large frame, Tory opinions, and a tendency to melancholia. He was sent, when eight years old, to the Free School in Lichfield, and at the age of sixteen received a good deal of classical instruction and much practical advice from his cousin, Cornelius Ford. When his father, after an interval, wished to re-enter him at the Lichfield School, the headmaster declined to receive him, and he finished his school education at Stourbridge, in Worcestershire, under a Mr. Wentworth. On the 31st of October 1728 he entered Pembroke College, Oxford, as private tutor to a gentleman named Corbett, who only remained in the University for two years; after which Johnson resided in Pembroke for another year, much straitened for money. His father died in December 1731, leaving him no more than twenty pounds for his support; and to maintain himself he accepted the under-mastership of the Grammar School at Market Bosworth in Leicestershire. Disgusted with this kind of work, he began to turn his

mind to literature, and in 1733, being at the time on a visit to his old friend and schoolfellow, Mr. Hector, at Birmingham, he undertook to translate for a bookseller of that town a Portuguese book, written by Jerome Lobo, a missionary, concerning his voyage to Abyssinia. The translation was published in 1735, and in the preface to this, Johnson's first literary enterprise, may be found the germs of that conception of human life which manifests itself so strongly in all his later writings :—

The reader will here find no regions cursed with irremediable barrenness, or blessed with spontaneous fecundity; no perpetual gloom or unceasing sunshine; nor are the nations here described either void of all sense of humanity or consummate in all private and social virtues; here are no Hottentots without religion, polity, or articulate language; no Chinese perfectly polite, and completely skilled in all sciences; he will discover, what will always be discovered by a diligent and impartial enquirer, that, wherever human nature is to be found, there is a mixture of vice and virtue, a contest of passion and reason; and that the Creator doth not appear partial in his distribution, but has balanced, in most countries, their particular inconveniences by particular favours.

From Birmingham in 1734 he returned to Lichfield, where he advertised a proposal—which met with no response—for printing the Latin poems of Politian, and began his connection with *The Gentleman's Magazine*. But as literature did not provide him with sufficient maintenance, he offered himself, without being accepted, as under-master to a Mr. Budworth, master of a grammar school at Brerewood in Staffordshire. About the same time he married Mrs. Porter, widow of a mercer in Birmingham, whose little fortune he employed in setting up a school for himself at Edial near Lichfield. Few pupils came to him, though among those who did was David Garrick, and in 1737 he resolved to come to London. Garrick accompanied him, and soon laid the foundation of his fortune by becoming an actor in the theatre at Goodman's Fields. Johnson, on the other hand, continued his connection with *The Gentleman's Magazine*, and endeavoured to gain a livelihood by hack literary work.

Soon after his arrival in London he made the acquaintance of Savage, whose fortunes were then at as low an ebb as his own, and he himself has described their companionship, and the depths of poverty to which they were reduced. Being an eager opponent of Walpole's foreign policy, he wrote in 1738 his *London*, an imitation of the third satire of Juvenal. I see no reason to doubt, in spite of what Boswell, backed by Croker, says to the contrary, that the Thales of this satire is Savage.[1] The poem, published on the same day as Pope's *Seventeen Hundred and Thirty-Eight*, made a great impression, and Pope, on being told that the author was an unknown man, said: "He will soon be *déterré*." The satire was, however, not calculated to procure him preferment, and Johnson continued to seek a struggling subsistence by working for booksellers. In 1743-44 he was employed by Osborne to catalogue the Harleian Miscellany, and in the same year he wrote for Cave his *Life of Savage*, a work which may be said to have laid a foundation for the *Lives of the English Poets*.

His *Plan of a Dictionary of the English Language* was published in 1747, and in that year he wrote for Garrick his famous *Prologue at the Opening of the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane*. On his side Garrick undertook to produce Johnson's tragedy *Irene*, which was put in rehearsal in January 1749. Before it appeared on the stage, Johnson, in order to bring his name once more prominently before the public, composed his *Vanity of Human Wishes*, in imitation of the tenth satire of Juvenal. *Irene*, as an acting play, did not succeed. While working on his *Dictionary*, Johnson added to his means of self-support by publishing *The Rambler*, a weekly paper, the first number

[1] See Croker's edition of Boswell's L [illegible]

of which appeared on the 20th of March 1750, and the last on the 14th of March 1752. The *Dictionary* was published in May 1755. After it came another weekly paper, *The Idler*, which, starting on the 15th of April 1758, was discontinued after the 5th of April 1760. *Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia*, appeared in 1759, the name and the scene of action in the story having been plainly suggested by Johnson's early translation of Lobo's work.[1] In May 1762 he received through Lord Bute, who was then Minister, a pension of £300 a year in reward of his literary labours, and henceforth, with the exception of his *Lives of the Poets*, completed in 1781, he did little work as a writer, beyond producing occasional verses and a few political pamphlets. He died on the 13th of December 1784.

The chief characteristic of Johnson's ethical poetry is the depth of feeling with which he illustrates universal truths by individual examples. In *London* he shows his skill in the vividness of the parallels he draws between his own and ancient times. Without attempting to reproduce the text of Juvenal minutely, he transforms the leading features of its picturesque imagery with so much happiness that it seems as if the civic Genius of old Rome had awakened from an interval of slumber, to find himself, without surprise, in the midst of London society. The reader who compares the following passages with the scattered phrases of the Roman poet, by which they are suggested, will be struck equally by the antiquity of the example and by its modern air:—

By numbers here from shame or censure free,
All crimes are safe but hated poverty.
This only this the rigid law pursues,
This only this provokes the snarling Muse.
The sober trader at a tattered cloak
Wakes from his dream, and labours for a joke;
With brisker air the silken courtiers gaze,
And turn the varied taunt a thousand ways.
Of all the griefs that harass the distressed,
Sure the most bitter is a scornful jest;

[1] Rassili Christos was the general of Sultan Sequed mentioned by Lobo.

Fate never wounds more deep the generous heart,
Than when a blockhead's insult points the dart.[1]

Has Heaven reserved, in pity to the poor,
No pathless waste or undiscovered shore?
No secret island in the boundless main?
No peaceful desert yet unclaimed by Spain?
Quick let us rise, the happy seats explore,
And bear Oppression's insolence no more.[2]

This mournful truth is everywhere confessed,
SLOW RISES WORTH BY POVERTY REPRESSED;
But here more slow where all are slaves to gold,
Where books are merchandise, and smiles are sold:
Where won by bribes, by flatteries implored,
The groom retails the favour of the lord.[3]

In *The Vanity of Human Wishes* the imitation is far more general. Johnson was in deep sympathy with Juvenal's view of life, but his object was to bring out his moral by modern examples and a completely Christian mood of feeling. He made therefore no attempt to invent equivalents for the particular phrases of the original, as he had done with such striking success in *London*: on the other hand, the imitation, as a whole, is

[1] This paragraph is quite transformed from the following original:—

Materiam praebet causasque jocorum
Omnibus hic idem, si foeda et scissa lacerna,
Si toga sordidula est, et rupta calceus alter
Pelle patet; vel si consuto vulnere crassum
Atque recens linum ostendit non una cicatrix.
Nil habet infelix paupertas durius in se,
Quam quod ridiculos homines facit.

We cannot but remember the incident of the shoes placed outside Johnson's door in Pembroke College, Oxford. How much more close he might have made the imitation had he been so minded!

[2] These lines spring out of a very slight hint:—

Agmine facto
Debuerant olim tenues migrasse Quirites.

[3] The imitation here is grounded on several scattered phrases:—

Haud facile emergunt quorum virtutibus obstat
Res angusta domi; sed Romae durior illis
Conatus.
. . . .
. . Omnia Romae
Cum pretio
. . . .
Cogimur et cultis augere peculia servis.

more deeply coloured than the earlier one with his own sentiments and character. For example:—

When first the college rolls receive his name,
The young enthusiast quits his ease for fame;
Resistless burns the fever of renown,
Caught from the strong contagion of the gown:
O'er Bodley's dome his future labours spread,
And Bacon's mansion trembles o'er his head.
Are these thy views? Proceed, illustrious youth,
And virtue guard thee to the throne of Truth!
Yet should thy soul indulge the generous heat,
Till captive Science yields her last retreat;
Should Reason guide thee with her brightest ray,
And pour on misty Doubt resistless day;
Should no false kindness lure to loose delight,
Nor praise relax, nor difficulty fright;
Should tempting Novelty thy cell refrain,
And Sloth effuse her opiate fumes in vain;
Should Beauty blunt on fops her fatal dart,
Nor claim the triumph of a lettered heart;
Should no Disease thy torpid veins invade,
Nor Melancholy's phantoms haunt thy shade,
Yet hope not life from grief or danger free,
Nor think the doom of man reversed for thee;
Deign on the passing world to turn thine eyes,
And pause awhile from learning, to be wise;
There mark what ills the scholar's life assail,
Toil, envy, want, the patron, and the jail.
See nations, slowly wise and meanly just,
To buried merit raise the tardy bust.
If dreams yet flatter, once again attend,
Hear Lydiat's life and Galileo's end.

In the original, the subject matter of this paragraph is the vanity of the fame of eloquence, and the examples given are the end of Demosthenes and that of Cicero. The intense personal feeling in the imitation is shown in the line:—

Toil, envy, want, the patron, and the jail:

where the word "patron" was substituted for "garret" —in itself sufficiently autobiographical—after Johnson's experience of Lord Chesterfield's neglect.

Nowhere is the character of Johnson reflected more strongly than in his *Prologues*. Only a great man would

dare to preach morality to a crowded theatre. Dryden indeed often ventured to address his audiences with disdain; but Johnson always treats his with respect. Striving to enlist their sympathies by appeals to their higher feelings, he invariably strikes a lofty moral note. Thus, in the Prologue written for Garrick at the opening of Drury Lane Theatre, he bids his hearers reflect on the immoral state of the stage in Charles II.'s reign:—

The wits of Charles found easier ways to fame,
Nor wished for Jonson's art or Shakespeare's flame;
Themselves they studied—as they felt they writ;
Intrigue was plot, obscenity was wit.
Vice always found a sympathetic friend;
They pleased their age, and did not aim to mend.
Yet bards like these aspired to lasting praise,
And proudly hoped to pimp in future days
Their cause was general, their supports were strong,
Their slaves were willing, and their reign was long,
Till Shame regained the post that Sense betrayed,
And Virtue called Oblivion to her aid.

The Prologue to *The Good-Natured Man* has a solemn opening:—

Prest by the load of life, the weary mind
Surveys the general toil of human kind;
With cool submission joins the lab'ring train,
And social sorrow loses half its pain.

And that to *A Word to the Wise* (a play which had been formerly damned) appeals to the common humanity of the audience, as follows:—

To Wit reviving from its author's dust
Be kind, ye judges, or at least be just,
For no renewed hostilities invade
Th' oblivious grave's inviolable shade.
Let one great payment every claim appease,
And him, who cannot hurt, allow to please;
To please by scenes unconscious of offence,
By harmless merriment or useful sense,
Where aught of bright or fair the piece displays,
Approve it only—'tis too late to praise.
If want of skill, or want of care, appear,
Forbear to hiss—the poet cannot hear.
By all like him must praise or blame be found,
At best a fleeting gleam or empty sound

The style of Johnson is in the highest degree characteristic. It has something of the "solemnity of thought" peculiar to Savage, and something of the metrical turn of expression peculiar to Pope, but the result is entirely Johnsonian. He does not attain to the beautiful lucidity of Goldsmith. Frequent inversions and ellipses, used as vehicles for his deep and pregnant thoughts, produce in his verse a certain obscurity, which is particularly felt in *The Vanity of Human Wishes*; as for example:—

Does envy seize thee? Crush the upbraiding joy;
Increase his riches, and his peace destroy;

meaning, "Crush the happiness of him whose prosperity causes you to upbraid Providence, by increasing his riches and so destroying his peace."

This power has praise, that virtue scarce can warm,
Till fame supplies the universal charm,

i.e. "Praise has so much power that, without the universal stimulus of fame, men will scarcely be roused to virtuous action."[1]

Safe in his power, whose eyes discern afar
The secret ambush of a specious prayer;

where the second line means "the ills that lie hid behind an apparently reasonable prayer." As his thought is abstract, the metaphors in which he conveys it are often vague. But their very vagueness increases the impressive solemnity of what is said:—

Then say how hope and fear, desire and hate,
O'erspread with snares the clouded maze of fate,
Where wavering man, betrayed by venturous pride
To tread the dreary paths without a guide,
As treacherous phantoms in the mist delude,
Shuns fancied ills, or chases airy good.

Or again—

Where then shall hope and fear their objects find?
Must dull suspense corrupt the stagnant mind?
Must helpless man, in ignorance sedate,
Roll darkling down the torrent of his fate?

[1] But the lines might also mean, "that virtue can scarce warm the world to admiration," etc.

And

> Speak thou, whose thoughts at humble peace repine,
> Shall Wolsey's wealth, with Wolsey's end, be thine?
> Or liv'st thou now, with safer pride content,
> The wisest justice on the banks of Trent?
> For why did Wolsey, near the steeps of fate,
> On weak foundations raise th' enormous weight?
> Why, but to sink beneath misfortune's blow,
> With louder ruin to the gulfs below?

The ethical basis of this whole school of poetry is personal experience gained by actual contact with life. Johnson and Goldsmith have much in common with each other in this respect. The former founded his moral idea of things on a sturdy self-dependence amplified by a discursive study of books; the latter on a self-evolved philosophy, derived from equally irregular wanderings among all sorts and conditions of men. No man had a more varied experience than Goldsmith of the vocations by which the individual may gain a living. He sought, without success, to be a clergyman and a surgeon; he obtained, somewhere and somehow, a degree as a physician; he wandered through Europe as a strolling musician; he taught as under-master in a school; he became a bookseller's assistant; he was a hack-writer for many publishers; as he says of himself, under a feigned character, he lived for the moment:—

> At first indeed I felt some uneasiness in considering how I should be able to provide this week for the wants of the week ensuing, but after some time, if I found myself sure of eating one day, I never troubled my head how I was to be supplied another. I seized every precarious meal with the utmost good humour, indulged no rants of spleen at my situation, never called down heaven and all the stars to behold me dining upon an half-pennyworth of radishes; my very companions were taught to believe that I liked salad better than mutton. I contented myself with thinking that all my life I should either eat white bread or brown; considered all that happened was best, laughed when I was not in pain, took the world as it went, and read Tacitus often for want of more books and company.[1]

[1] *Citizen of the World*, Letter [illegible].

We are, in a sense, reminded of Juvenal's

Omnia novit
Graeculus esuriens.

And whatever experience Goldsmith gained from his vagabond life he reflected in varied kinds of literature. He was successively translator, critic, essayist, poet, dramatist, novelist, historian: "nullum fere scribendi genus non tetigit." But his epitaph also adds, with complete justice, "nullum quod tetigit non ornavit;" and however much the subject matter of his composition was determined by the exigencies of others, the graces he bestowed upon it were eminently his own.

To dwell minutely on the life of this child of Nature and Genius, whose writings are so clear a mirror of his own actions, and whose every action is so full of character, would of course be foreign to the purpose of this History. It must suffice to give a brief sketch of his career.[1] Oliver Goldsmith, the son of Charles Goldsmith, Rector of Kilkenny West, was born on the 10th of November 1728 at Pallas, or Pallasmore, in Longford. His first teachers were his relative Elizabeth Delap, and Thomas Byrne, whose character he has immortalised as the schoolmaster of *The Deserted Village*. He was next sent to school at Elphin, and thence to Athlone to a school kept by a Mr. Campbell. After two years he was removed to the charge of the Rev. Patrick Hughes of Edgeworthstown, from whom he gained most of his classical knowledge. At the age of fifteen he was admitted to Trinity College, Dublin, and became B.A. on the 27th of February 1749.

Intending to take Orders, he presented himself in 1751 to the Bishop of Elphin, but was rejected. He then turned his attention to medicine and, after some rather purposeless roaming in Ireland, went to Edinburgh in 1752 to study for that profession. He is next heard of in Holland, whither he had gone to attend the lectures of Albinus at the University of Leyden, but where he seems

[1] A compact and accurate account of Goldsmith's Life is to be found in Mr. Austin Dobson's excellent *Goldsmith* in the "Great Writers" series.

to have occupied himself rather with the pleasures of canal travelling. His imagination was also fired by the Memoirs of the Baron de Holberg, who had journeyed over Europe on foot,[1] and in emulation of whose adventures he left Leyden in February 1755, to begin his own travels "with only one clean shirt and no money in his pocket." A year was spent in wandering on the Continent, during which time he gathered many of the materials which he afterwards turned to literary account in *The Traveller* and other works. The story of George Primrose in *The Vicar of Wakefield* is doubtless grounded on his own; but how much of this and of other tales which he tells about himself is due to his gift of romancing it is impossible to decide. On his return to England in February 1756 he was first employed as usher in the school of Dr. Milner at Peckham, but hating the work, he undertook, in 1757, to help Griffiths, the publisher of *The Monthly Review*, a kind of drudgery, which proved not less distasteful to his volatile temper, and induced him in the early part of 1758 to return to the house of Dr. Milner. It is interesting to note that Goldsmith's earliest criticism on Gray appeared in *The Monthly Review* for September 1757. In December 1758 he endeavoured to obtain an appointment as "hospital-mate," but on presenting himself for examination at Surgeons' Hall was found to be "not qualified."

He therefore fell back on hack-work for the booksellers, and from a letter written to his brother it appears that, in February 1759, his account of Voltaire and some of the lines that afterwards appeared in *The Deserted Village* were already in existence. The latter were first intended to describe the abode of an Author, and were indeed a pretty faithful picture of Goldsmith's own rooms in Green Arbour Court. From this retreat were sent in 1759 papers to *The Bee*, *The Lady's Magazine*, and *The Busy-body*, as well as the *Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe*: essays that were followed in 1760 by contributions to *The British Magazine*, then under

[1] *Enquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning*

the editorship of Smollett, and to *The Public Ledger*, in the latter of which appeared the Chinese Letters, afterwards called *The Citizen of the World*.

He had now removed to Wine Office Court, and here in 1761 he made the acquaintance of Johnson. In 1762 he again changed his residence to the house of a Mrs. Fleming in Islington, where his board and lodging were paid by Newbery, publisher of *The British Magazine* and *The Public Ledger*. Under this roof was written *The Traveller*, which was published on the 19th of December 1764. *The Vicar of Wakefield* seems to have been nearly completed in Wine Office Court, where the famous incidents recorded by Boswell must have taken place,[1] but it was not published till the 27th of March 1766. On the 29th of January 1768 Goldsmith made his first experiment as a dramatist, when *The Good-Natured Man* was produced at Covent Garden by Colman, with moderate success. In the same year he removed his quarters to Brick Court in the Temple, where he lived for the remainder of his life. His literary work during this year was mainly confined to the writing of his *History of Rome*, but he also undertook to compile for the publisher Griffin a *New History of Animals*, in eight volumes, each to be paid for at the rate of a hundred guineas, and for Davies a *History of England* in four volumes, for which he was to receive £500. The former agreement was made in February 1769, the latter after the appearance of the *Roman History* in May of that year. It was doubtless in recognition of the latter work that Goldsmith, through the influence of Reynolds, was soon afterwards appointed Professor of Ancient History to the Royal Academy. On the 26th of May 1770 was published *The Deserted Village* with its dedication to Reynolds, which was followed in July of the same year by *The Life of Thomas Parnell*.

The remainder of his work requires but a brief notice. In August 1771 he completed and published his *History of England* (abridged from the first design), and had half

[1] See Boswell's *Life of Johnson* (Croker's edition), p. 141.

of his *Natural History* written. The death of Augusta, Princess Dowager of Wales, inspired him in February 1772 to write an official ode, *Threnodia Augustalis*, and about the same time he placed in the hands of Colman his last comedy, *She Stoops to Conquer*. This was not acted till the 15th of March in the following year, when it was produced with complete success at Covent Garden. Goldsmith obtained for the play alone nearly £500, apart from the profits derived from its publication as a book, and, being now better provided than usual with money, he seems to have relaxed his literary efforts, confining himself to a *Grecian History*, of which one volume was completed in June 1773, and brought him from Griffin £250. He doubtless went on working in a leisurely fashion at the different tasks he had undertaken for the booksellers, but these were interrupted before their completion, by his death, which happened on the 4th of April 1774. On the 9th of the same month he was buried in the Temple, leaving in the circle of his intimate acquaintance a vacant place that could never be filled with such natural gaiety, and memories of a kind and benevolent heart to numbers of humbler mourners who had been aided by his bounty. After his death were published the famous *Retaliation* on the 19th of April 1774, *Animated Nature* in June of the same year, and in 1776 *The Haunch of Venison*.

The leading feature of the ethical school of poetry which descended from Pope was the impression, on a traditional style, of individual life and character, and in this school Goldsmith was the writer who carried his art to the highest point of perfection. Like Shakespeare, on a small scale, he reveals himself through his *dramatis personae*. He himself is at once the Moses, the George Primrose, and the Dr. Primrose of *The Vicar of Wakefield*; his are the adventures of the Man in Black in *The Citizen of the World*; his own sentiments and experiences are lyrically embodied in *The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village*. From actual observation of men and things he drew his philosophy of life, and almost all his serious poetry is conceived in a

moral vein. The elements that make up the ethical result, social, political, and æsthetic, taken together, constitute the form and framework of his poetical style. Society, according to Goldsmith's view, ought to be at once simple and refined: it should be kept in a state of health by custom rather than by law; it is bound to decay when moderate wealth is not equally distributed, and a few become very rich at the expense of a multitude who are very poor. His principles are expounded both in *The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village*. In the latter, describing a supposed Golden Age, he says:—

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates and men decay.
Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade;
A breath can make them, as a breath has made;
But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
When once destroyed, can never be supplied.

A time there was, ere England's grief began,
When every rood of ground maintained its man;
For him light labour spread her wholesome store,
Just gave what life required, but gave no more:
His best companions, innocence and health;
And his best riches ignorance of wealth.

But times are altered; trade's unfeeling train
Usurp the land and dispossess the swain;
Along the lawn where scattered hamlets rose,
Unwieldy wealth, and cumbrous pomp repose;
And every want to opulence allied,
And every pang that folly pays to pride.
Those gentle hours that plenty bade to bloom,
Those calm desires that asked but little room,
Those healthful sports that graced the peaceful scene,
Lived in each look, and brightened all the green,
These, far departing, seek a kinder shore,
And rural mirth and manners are no more.

In *The Traveller* he illustrates the same theme by instancing the decay of the sense of national greatness in Holland:—

Thus, while around the wave-subjected soil
Impels the native to repeated toil,
Industrious habits in each bosom reign,
And industry begets a love of gain.

Hence all the good from opulence that springs,
With all those ills superfluous treasure brings,
Are here displayed. Their much loved wealth imparts
Convenience, plenty, elegance, and arts;
But view them closer, craft and fraud appear;
Even liberty itself is bartered here.
At gold's superior charms all freedom flies;
The needy sell it, and the rich man buys;
A land of tyrants, and a den of slaves,
Here wretches seek dishonourable graves,
And, calmly bent, to servitude conform,
Dull as their lakes that slumber in the storm.

Heavens! how unlike their Belgic sires of old!
Rough, poor, content, ungovernably bold;
War in each breast, and freedom in each brow;
How much unlike the sons of Britain now!

Highly as he appreciated the public spirit of the aristocratic *régime* under which he lived, Goldsmith believed that he saw grave dangers in the excess of party spirit encouraged by political liberty. Politically, he and Johnson were in the closest sympathy, as is shown by the fact that, with the exception of one couplet, the last ten lines of *The Traveller* were furnished by the latter. Both of them were agreed in thinking—

How small of all that human hearts endure
That part which laws or kings can cause or cure!

Both had a hearty dislike of the political aims of the great Whig houses, and Goldsmith expressed it thus in *The Traveller*:—

O then how blind to all that truth requires,
Who think it freedom when a part aspires!
Calm is my soul, nor apt to rise in arms,
Except when fast approaching danger warms;
But when contending chiefs blockade the throne,
Contracting regal power to stretch their own,
When I behold a factious band agree
To call it freedom when themselves are free;
Each wanton judge new penal statutes draw,
Laws grind the poor, and rich men rule the law;
The wealth of climes, where savage nations roam,
Pillaged from slaves, to purchase slaves at home;

Fear, pity, justice, *indignation*, start,
Tear off reserve, and bare my swelling heart;
Till, half a patriot, half a coward grown,
I fly from petty tyrants to the throne.

In these lines Goldsmith appears manifestly as a disciple of Bolingbroke, and the same sentiments are repeated in *The Vicar of Wakefield*.[1]

As to his poetical style, the extracts that I have given furnish very good examples of its character. It was consciously formed on a definite critical theory, which, like his moral axioms, he is fond of airing whenever an opportunity offers. It may be that his insistence in this respect is to be attributed in part to his literary jealousy: certain it is that he always seems glad to be able to deliver a side-stroke at the blank verse of Akenside, the Pindarics of Gray, and the satiric manner of Churchill. But, on the whole, it seems to me probable that his adverse criticisms on these poets were dictated by a conviction that their practice in metrical composition was proceeding upon wrong lines. His own style may be described as the quintessence of the English classical manner. The groundwork of this is indeed hard to define: one principle of classicism—careful *study of the ancients*—is no doubt expounded in Goldsmith's remarks on Parnell's poetry;[2] but in these he says nothing of the equally important principle contained in the historic development of the heroic couplet. Nor can I altogether agree with Mr. Dobson in his estimate of Goldsmith's metrical manner:

> In spite of their beauty and humanity, the lasting quality of *The Traveller* and *The Deserted Village* is seriously prejudiced by his half-way attitude between the poetry of convention and the poetry of nature—between the gradus epithet of Pope and the direct vocabulary of Wordsworth.[3]

The "gradus epithet of Pope," as I have said, is a feature only to be found in his Pastoral and Descriptive poems, and in his Translations of Homer: he himself declares, and rightly, that he left it behind him when he

[1] *Vicar of Wakefield*, chap. xix. [2] See p. 188.
[3] *A Paladin of Philanthropy* (1899), p. 59.

emerged from "Fancy's maze" and "moralised his song." At the same time, the style of Goldsmith is not directly imitated from the moral style of Pope; it differs from the latter to the same extent that the temperament of Goldsmith differs from the temperament of the greatest satirist of the eighteenth century. I cannot better convey my idea of the classical character of Goldsmith's verse than through the fine description of the Attic manner by a writer who has perhaps realised the spirit of Greek literature more vividly than any other Englishman:—

> It would, of course, be misleading to speak of Attic authors as if they all wrote in one style. The broad contrasts between them are numerous and striking: the few shades of difference are endlessly various. But there are certain common characteristics which mark the Attic manner. The speech is that of daily life, direct and lucid; of men who are accustomed to easy human intercourse without artificial barrier or restraint, who desire to understand and be understood of others. But the colloquial idiom is raised above the commonplace. It has an added touch of distinction unobtrusive but unmistakable, a beauty or charm which conceals the hand of the artist, sometimes too an energy, a compactness of phrase—quite unlike the flowing grace of the Ionian writers—which reminds us, perhaps too forcibly, that this finely tempered instrument of language has been forged or sharpened in the rhetorical schools.
>
> It is a style scrupulous in the purity of its diction in avoidance of provincialisms, in the effort to hit the right rather than the approximately right word. It has a certain well-bred elegance which cannot be mistaken for pedantry. It obeys, moreover, the law of reserve; it wins the goodwill of the reader by leaving something to his own intelligence. In the region of feeling it is discreet and guarded. It refuses to speak in acc[illegible] of emotion where emotion is wanting; but where real pass[illegible] to be expressed the glow of feeling is at once revealed [illegible] rising tone and in rhythms in which we seem to ove[illegible] very vibrations of the voice.[1]

It is precisely the qualities thus admir[illegible] which seem to me to make the ethical sty[illegible] both in prose and verse, looked at from [illegible] the most purely "Attic" in Eng[illegible]

[1] S. H. Butcher, *Harvard Lectures*, pp. [illegible] pp. 19 20. [illegible]

grounds himself on the spoken language of his country, and in *Retaliation* and other poems he shows a mastery over colloquial idiom as complete as that of Prior and Swift. But he adds to this, in his treatment of the heroic couplet, the "touch of distinction," learned from the literary practice of many generations of English poets from Drayton to Pope, of which I have so often spoken. If, in some of his antithetical turns, we are reminded, "perhaps too forcibly, that this finely tempered instrument of language has been forged and sharpened in the rhetorical schools," this only makes the resemblance between him and the Attic writers more complete. He has, however, cleared his style of the obscurities which are often to be found in Johnson's poetry, and which arise out of that great man's affection for Latin, and his attempts to reproduce its idioms in English. If Goldsmith in one place speaks of a lake as the "finny deep," I believe that is the only—or nearly the only—example of a "gradus epithet" to be found in *The Traveller*; while such phrases in *The Deserted Village* as

> Careful to see the mantling bliss go round,

and

> The robe that wraps his limbs in silken sloth,

are clearly constructions of a different kind. Generally speaking, Goldsmith's style is one of unadorned simplicity.[1] He is perhaps the only English poet who has succeeded in introducing into the traditional treatment of the heroic couplet the note of individual pathos, so that, like the Attic orators, "where real passion has to be expressed the glow of feeling is at once revealed in the rising tone and in rhythms in which we seem to overhear the very vibrations of the voice." The opening lines of *The Traveller* are an example of what I mean, and an even better illustration may be found in the following well-known and exquisite passage from *The Deserted Village*:—

> In all my wanderings round this world of care,
> In all my griefs—and God has given my share—

[1] Goldsmith's hatred of affectation is illustrated, among many similar passages in his works, by his remarks on Shaftesbury in *The Bee*, No. viii.

I still had hopes my latest hours to crown,
Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down;
To husband out Life's taper at the close,
And keep the flame from wasting by repose.
I still had hopes, for pride attends us still,
Amidst the swains to show my book-learned skill;
Around my fire an evening group to draw,
And tell of all I felt and all I saw;
And as an hare, whom hounds and horns pursue,
Pants to the place from whence at first she flew,
I still had hopes, my long vexations past,
Here to return—and die at home at last.

The last poet whom I shall mention in this chapter is not directly connected with the ethical school of Pope, because his masterpiece is not so much didactic as narrative; but it has many points of relationship to the poems which have just been noticed. It is founded on personal experience: it is pervaded by a solemn and tragic vein of thought: and it is written in heroic couplets modelled after the manner of Pope's disciples.

William Falconer, author of *The Shipwreck*, was born at Edinburgh in 1736 or 1737. His father was a barber in the town, all whose other children were deaf and dumb. He was educated at the school of one Webster, and, when not more, perhaps less, than ten years of age, was apprenticed on board a merchant vessel at Leith. He afterwards became servant to Archibald Campbell, author of *Lexiphanes*, who was purser of a ship, and by whom, probably, Falconer's literary inclinations were first encouraged. These must in any case have been developed at an early age, for in 1751 he wrote an Elegy on the death of Frederick, Prince of Wales. It may be, too, that he went to sea against his will, for, in painting his own portrait in the character of Arion in *The Shipwreck*, he says:—

On him fair science dawned in happier hour,
Awakening into bloom young fancy's flower,
But soon adversity, with freezing blast,
The blossoms withered and the dawn o'ercast.
Forlorn of hope, and by severe decree
Condemned reluctant to the faithless sea,
With long farewell he left the laurel grove,
Where science and the tuneful sisters rove.

He at any rate became second mate on the "Britannia," a merchant vessel, which was shipwrecked, during a voyage from Alexandria to Venice, on the island of Falconera, near Cape Colonna. His experiences on this occasion form the subject of his chief poem. *The Shipwreck*, published in 1762, was dedicated to the Duke of York, and brought Falconer into such favourable notice, that he was appointed the same year midshipman on board Sir Edward Hawke's ship "The Royal George." In 1763 he became purser of the "Glory," and took to wife a Miss Hicks. For some years after this he seems to have been occupied with his *Marine Dictionary*, which was published in 1769, and in that year he came to London. He was offered a partnership by John Murray, the founder of the famous publishing house, but felt himself obliged to decline it. His decision in this matter proved fatal to him, for almost immediately afterwards he went as purser on board the frigate "Aurora," which, being wrecked on a reef off Macao, was lost with all hands in 1769.

Falconer was a poet of real genius. With very little education from books, his natural good taste, disciplined by the solemn scenes he witnessed, equipped him with a refined and elevated style. There is an admirable simplicity in the opening lines of *The Shipwreck* :—

A ship from Egypt, o'er the deep impelled,
By guiding winds her course for Venice held.
Of famed Britannia were the gallant crew,
And from that isle her name the vessel drew.
The wayward steps of fortune they pursued,
And sought in certain ills imagined good.
Though cautioned oft her slippery path to shun,
Hope still with promised joys allured them on;
And while they listened to her winning lore,
The softer scenes of peace could please no more.
Long absent they from friends and native home
The cheerless ocean were inured to roam;
Yet heaven, in pity to severe distress,
Had crowned each painful voyage with success;
Still, to compensate toils and hazards past,
Restored them to maternal plains at last.[1]

[1] Canto i.

The cheerful mood in which the crew anticipate what was to prove, for most of them, their last voyage is described with tragic skill:—

Inflamed by hope, their throbbing hearts dilate;
Ideal pleasures vainly antedate,
Before whose vivid intellectual ray
Distress recedes, and danger melts away.
Already British coasts appear to rise;
The chalky cliffs salute their longing eyes;
Each to his breast, where floods of rapture roll,
Embracing, strains the mistress of his soul.
Nor less o'erjoyed, with sympathetic truth,
Each faithful maid expects the approaching youth.
In distant souls congenial passions glow,
And mutual feelings mutual bliss bestow:
Such shadowy happiness their thoughts employ;
Illusions all and visionary joy![1]

The descriptions of the changes of Nature during the voyage have all the vividness inspired by things actually experienced and strongly felt:—

Deep midnight now involves the livid skies,
Where eastern breezes, yet enervate, rise.
The waning moon, behind a watery shroud,
Pale glimmered o'er the long protracted cloud;
A mighty halo, round her silver throne,
With parting meteors crossed, portentous shone.
This in the troubled sky full oft prevails,
Oft deemed a signal of tempestuous gales.[2]

Or,

On the larboard quarter they descry
A liquid column, towering, shoot on high;
The foaming base the angry whirlwinds sweep,
Where curling billows rouse the fearful deep.
Still round and round the fluid vortex flies,
Diffusing briny vapours o'er the skies.[3]

Or,

But, see, in confluence borne before the blast,
Clouds rolled on clouds the dusky noon o'ercast
The blackening ocean curls, the winds arise,
And the dark scud in swift succession flies.[4]

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[1] Canto i.
[2] Canto ii. 23.
[3] Canto i. 671.
[4] Canto ii. 127.

As he approaches the climax of the tragedy, the poet seems to shudder at the clearness of his recollection :—

O yet confirm my heart, ye Powers above!
This last tremendous shock of fate to prove;
The tottering frame of reason yet sustain,
Nor let this total havoc whirl my brain;
Since I, all trembling in extreme distress,
Must still the horrible result express.[1]

And the catastrophe itself, when the ship has struck, is painted with extraordinary power :—

In vain the cords and axes were prepared,
For every wave now smites the quivering yard;
High o'er the ship they throw a dreadful shade,
Then on her burst in terrible cascade,
Across the foundered deck o'erwhelming roar,
And foaming, swelling, bound upon the shore.
Swift up the mounting billow now she flies,
Her shattered top half-buried in the skies;
Borne o'er a latent reef the hull impends,
Then thundering on the marble crag descends.
Her ponderous gulf the dire concussion feels,
And o'er upheaving surges wounded reels.
Again she plunges! hark! a second shock
Bilges the splitting vessel on the rock!
Down on the vale of death, with dismal cries,
The fated victims shuddering cast their eyes
In wild despair; while yet another stroke
With strong convulsions rends the solid oak:
Ah heaven! behold her crashing ribs divide!
She loosens, spreads, and parts in ruin o'er the tide.[2]

The defects of *The Shipwreck* are first the conventional style of its versification. It is plain that the poet had modelled this on Pope's translation of the *Iliad*, a practice which, as the extracts I have given show, tends to "make poetry" (or at least metre) "a mere mechanic art." Another fault is, that he sometimes fails to realise the fact that his poem is narrative, and not didactic. Misled by his admiration for the digressions in compositions like *The Seasons*, he tries to introduce similar passages, and in the third Canto, while the vessel is rushing to her doom, pauses to make

[1] Canto iii. 612.

[2] Canto iii. 633-652

an excursion to "the adjacent nations of Greece, renowned in antiquity," where he dwells upon the virtues of Socrates, Plato, and Aristides. Finally he falls into the error of using many technical terms, and though this is occasioned by the intensity of his actual experience, it mars the effect of his striking descriptions by compelling the reader to refer constantly to foot-notes. Thus—

Roused from his trance, he mounts with eyes aghast,
When o'er the ship in undulation vast,
A giant surge down rushes from on high,
And fore and aft discovered ruins lie.
As when Britannia's empire to maintain,
Great Hawke descends in thunder on the main,
Around the brazen voice of battle roars,
And fatal lightnings blast the hostile shores;
Beneath the storm their shattered navies groan;
The trembling deep recoils from zone to zone:
Thus the torn vessel felt th' enormous stroke;
The boats beneath the thundering deluge broke,
Torn from their planks, the cracking ring-bolts drew,
And gripes and lashings all asunder flew;
Companion, binnacle, in floating wreck,
With compasses and glasses strew the deck;
The balanced mizzen, rending to the head,
In fluttering fragments from its bolt-rope fled;
The sides convulsive shook on groaning beams,
And rent with labour yawned their pitchy seams[1]

[1] Canto ii. 447-466.

As he approaches the climax of the tragedy, the poet seems to shudder at the clearness of his recollection :—

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This last tremendous shock of fate to prove;
The tottering frame of reason yet sustain,
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And foaming, swelling, bound upon the shore.
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Her shattered top half-buried in the skies;
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She loosens, spreads, and parts in rui

duced its greatest masterpieces from the hands of Reynolds, Gainsborough, and Romney. Wit and social refinement were illustrated by the conversation of Johnson and Burke, and by the letter-writing of Horace Walpole, Gray, and Cowper. It is at first sight difficult to understand how so much brilliancy in the general life of the nation should have coexisted with so much factiousness, corruption, and cynicism in the sphere of its Government.

Looking below the surface, however, we see that the inconsistency may in great part be accounted for by the fact that the age was one of transition. The problem of Constitutional Liberty that had arisen out of the conflict between the Crown and the Parliament in the seventeenth century had received a practical solution; the questions of democratic government raised by the French Revolution as yet existed only in the germ. No continuous traditional principle any longer separated the historic parties. On the other hand, the difficulties of governing a free and growing empire occasioned frequent mistakes on the part of statesmen; and, accordingly, the conflicts of factious ambition were proportionately bitter. The struggle for the control of affairs lay between the Crown, of which the prerogative had been left nominally unimpaired at the Revolution of 1688, and the associated groups of aristocratic families—Wentworths, Cavendishes, Russells, and others—under whose conduct the Revolution had been practically effected. The key of the position was the extent of influence which either side could bring to bear on the House of Commons through the votes of the representatives of the small boroughs; and to secure these all the arts of parliamentary corruption were practised with unscrupulous skill. But beyond Crown and Parliament were the irregular and incalculable forces of unrepresented Public Opinion, and the balance in the conflict between the two Constitutional Powers was often rudely disturbed by the oratory of the demagogue and the violence of the mob. The age of the Bill of Rights, of the Act of Settlement, and of the Septennial Act was followed by the age of the party fight for the control of the India

CHAPTER VIII

DECLINE OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL SATIRE

CHARLES CHURCHILL; *THE ROLLIAD*; *PETER PINDAR*

THE forty years between the fall of Walpole and the rise of the younger Pitt are, perhaps, the most confused and perplexing in the political history of England. In no other period of the same length were there so many changes of Government, so much inconsistency in the profession of party principles, such strange alliances between leading statesmen. "Those persons," said Lord North in the House of Commons, defending himself for his alliance with Fox, "who reprobate the present Coalition forget that it is almost impossible to find in this assembly any individuals now acting together who have not differed materially on great and important points."[1] And this appearance of disorder is the more remarkable because the time is distinguished for the greatness of its achievements and the genius of the men that belonged to it. The supremacy of England at sea was firmly established. If she had to submit to the loss of her American colonies, her power was vastly increased in the West and the East by the conquest of Canada and the founding of her Indian Empire. It was the Golden Age of parliamentary oratory; no modern assembly has matched for lofty eloquence the Houses of Commons that listened to the speeches of the two Pitts, Burke, Fox, and Sheridan. English painting then pro-

[1] *Historical and Posthumous Memoirs of Sir Nathaniel William Wraxall* (1884), vol. iii. p. 40.

duced its greatest masterpieces from the hands of Reynolds, Gainsborough, and Romney. Wit and social refinement were illustrated by the conversation of Johnson and Burke, and by the letter-writing of Horace Walpole, Gray, and Cowper. It is at first sight difficult to understand how so much brilliancy in the general life of the nation should have coexisted with so much factiousness, corruption, and cynicism in the sphere of its Government.

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Board, of the warfare between the House of Commons and the electorate about the question of privilege, of the riots about Admiral Byng and about Popery. Public affairs were conducted in the midst of bribery, backstairs intrigues, and frequent incendiarism. In a political atmosphere, where party interests counted for more than great constitutional principles, the importance of every little political magnate—whether a nabob who was a "King's Friend," or a borough-owner who voted with the "Revolution Houses"—was greatly increased, and even a John Wilkes, a Lord George Gordon, or a Tom Paine, might fill a larger space in the imagination of the people than had formerly been occupied by a Somers or a Shrewsbury.

As was inevitable, the changed conditions of politics found a reflection in the sphere of poetry. For at least a hundred years satire had been developing itself as the chief literary weapon of offence in the civil conflicts of a free nation, and from the very first it had been distinguished by a strong personal and party character. Cleveland's bitter invectives against the Scots and the English Presbyterians[1] were followed by Dryden's assaults on Shaftesbury and his Whig followers, and these had been outdone by the intense personality of Pope's vivisection of the Dunces. But in all those instances some pretence of lofty principle lifted the use of satire above the level of mere lampoon to a more generous plane of thought. Cleveland's satires were the representative utterances of one of the parties in a civil war. *Absalom and Achitophel* stands above all other English satires in the admirable public spirit by which it is professedly animated; even the author of *The Dunciad* claims to be striking at his enemies as the saviour of society. But satire in the reign of George III. was seldom inspired by anything higher than a factious motive. Such popularity as it enjoyed—and this was often immense—was due to the excitement of transient popular emotions or to the enmities of private individuals, and as these vanished, the

[1] Vol. iii. pp. 296-299.

point of the satire itself was lost to posterity. Of this tendency the most striking example is the satire of Churchill.

Charles Churchill was born in Vine Street, Westminster, in February 1731. His father was rector of Rainham in Essex, and curate and lecturer of St. John's, Westminster. Sent to school at Westminster when he was only eight years old, Churchill found himself the companion of a number of able boys, many of whom, such as William Cowper, Warren Hastings, George Colman, and Robert Lloyd, became afterwards more or less famous. Though he was designed for orders, he never resided at Oxford or Cambridge. After being ordained deacon, he first served as curate at South Cadbury in Somersetshire, from which place, when he had taken priest's orders, he went in 1756 to Rainham as curate, and, on his father's death in 1758, succeeded him as lecturer of St. John's, Westminster. An early, secret, and ill-assorted marriage had involved him in money difficulties, from which he was relieved by the kindness of Dr. Lloyd, under-master of Westminster, and the father of his friend Robert Lloyd, the poet. Churchill now turned his attention to literature, and after two of his compositions, *The Bard* and *The Conclave*, had been rejected, had the good judgment and good fortune to find an object for his satire in the stage.

Though the genius of the poetic drama had long departed, the art of poetic acting had now reached its zenith, and the actors of the day formed an organised society, which was connected by intimate ties of many kinds with the ruling aristocracy. This society had as yet encountered no criticism from without, though Robert Lloyd had approached the subject in a poem, called *The Actor*, published in 1760. When, therefore, Churchill's satire, *The Rosciad*, appeared in 1761 it exploded like a bombshell among its astonished victims. The good sense and independence of its criticism, as well as the freedom and vigour of its style, interested all "the town," and Churchill followed up his success with a spirited sequel, called *The Apology*, written to chastise *The Critical Review*

(then edited by Smollett), which had entered the lists on the opposite side.

Unfortunately his easy triumph turned his head. Having made about £1000 by his two poems, he thought he might disregard the opinion of the sober world. Not only did he throw off his clerical dress, but he set at defiance the usual standards of lay decency as impudently as though he were living in the times of Charles II. He went about the town with a cudgel in ostentatious defiance of the actors, and fancied himself, as a satirist, the superior of Pope. When the numerous enemies he had made called public attention to his swaggering airs, he thought it sufficient to defend himself in an epistle to his friend Lloyd, called *Night*, in which he concluded :—

> *Steadfast and true to virtue's sacred laws,*
> Unmoved by vulgar censure or applause,
> Let the World talk, my friend ; that World, we know
> Which calls us guilty, cannot make us so.
> Unawed by numbers, follow Nature's plan ;
> Assert the rights, or quit the name of man.
> Consider well, weigh strictly right and wrong ;
> Resolve not quick, but, once resolved, be strong.
> In spite of dulness, and in spite of wit,
> If to thyself thou canst thyself acquit,
> Rather stand up, assured with conscious pride,
> Alone, than err with millions on thy side.

For politics he professed to care nothing :—

> What is't to us, if taxes rise or fall ?
> Thanks to our fortune, we pay none at all.
> Let muckworms, who in dirty acres deal,
> Lament those hardships which we cannot feel.
> His grace, who smarts, may bellow if he please,
> But must I bellow too, who sit at ease ?
> By custom safe the poet's numbers flow,
> Free as the light and air some years ago.[1]
> No statesman e'er will find it worth his pains
> To tax our labours, and excise our brains.
> Burthens like these vile earthly buildings bear ;
> No tribute 's laid on castles in the air.

[1] Alluding to the elder Pitt's window-tax.

> Let then the flames of war destructive reign,
> And England's terrors awe imperious Spain.
> Let every venal clan and neutral tribe
> Learn to receive conditions, not prescribe;
> Let each new year call loud for new supplies;
> And tax on tax with double burthen rise;
> Exempt we sit, by no rude cares oppressed,
> And, having little, are with little blessed.[1]

But how ill he knew himself was shortly to be shown. *In 1762 he made the acquaintance of John Wilkes, and* almost immediately became the party tool of that unscrupulous demagogue. Wilkes was a man without either heart or honour.[2] His only thought was how to satisfy the wish of the moment, and he was ready to cringe or be impudent as the occasion required. In private life, and as a member of the notorious Medmenham Monastery, he mixed with men who indulged their prurient imaginations with all kinds of foulness and blasphemy. On the other hand, an admirable quickness of wit, an inexhaustible flow of animal spirits, and, when he chose, excellent manners, gave him the qualities required in a boon companion. He had been a follower of Pitt during his great administration, and, after the resignation of the latter in 1761, found a good opportunity of posing before the public as an English patriot.

The Earl of Bute, who became Prime Minister in Pitt's stead, was supported by a paper called *The Briton*, under the editorship of Smollett. By way of parody Wilkes, on 5th June 1762, started a weekly periodical called *The North Briton*, published every Saturday, in which the peace-at-any-price tendencies of the new Administration were wittily satirised. Bute's incompetence, in contrast with the genius of Pitt, might have afforded him material enough, but the force of Wilkes' writing lay

1 *Night*, 263-282.

2 [illegible] "heart" [illegible] he would [illegible] ared, and [illegible] s proved [illegible] Museum, [illegible] d, which shows that he seduced the wife while receiving benefits from the husband.

in his appeal to the passions of the multitude. Bute was assailed partly as the representative of the Scots, who kept pouring into England, partly as a royal "favourite" in the most odious sense of the word; and the conduct of the paper, though very entertaining, was abominably scandalous. After indulging his license to the full for many weeks, Wilkes at last attained the end for which he had doubtless been scheming. On the appearance of *No. 45*, in which the King was accused of mendacity, he was arrested by a general warrant, and—though the arrest was declared illegal in the Courts of Law—was expelled from the House of Commons and declared an outlaw. His character was further damaged by the seizure of his *Essay on Woman*, which, when only privately printed, had been put into the hands of the Earl of Sandwich, and was treated by the infamous "Jemmy Twitcher" as a breach of his privileges as a peer. Unable to resist the forces by which he was assailed, Wilkes, for the time, gave up the contest and withdrew to France.

Churchill was in most respects the opposite of Wilkes, being honest and good-hearted. The latter, who doubtless saw that he might turn the poet's satiric abilities to his own account, had engaged his services for *The North Briton*, and Churchill embraced with conviction his friend's stage patriotism, "bellowing" in the party conflict as loudly as any landowner whom he had before sneered at for opposing the warlike policy of Pitt. In January 1763 he published his *Prophecy of Famine* to inflame the popular fury against the Scots; and after Wilkes' arrest he poured forth a rapid series of poems, praising the demagogue and abusing his enemies; in July 1763, the *Epistle to Hogarth* (who had caricatured Wilkes); in November of the same year, *The Duellist*, written immediately after the duel between Wilkes and Martin; and, in June 1764, *The Candidate*, directed against Sandwich, in the election of a High Steward for the University of Cambridge.[1]

Meantime he continued to defy the public standard of decency, and at the same time to assert his right to

pose as *censor morum*. He seduced the daughter of one Carr, a tradesman of Westminster, and then, conscience-stricken for his act, made penitent allusion to it in a poem called *The Conference*, published in November 1763. In *The Times* (published September 1764) he dwelt at length on the existence of secret crimes which if they had prevailed and been condoned to the extent that he hints, must have infallibly caused the destruction of society. These satires, full as they apparently were of personality, veiled under blanks, initials, and fictitious names, stimulated the public curiosity, and between the prestige of his *Rosciad* and *Prophecy of Famine* and his association with the popular idol Wilkes, Churchill never failed to make excellent terms for himself with the booksellers. His honest and affectionate disposition was shown by the generosity with which he employed his profits in support of his less fortunate friends. But the favour of the public intensified his self-deception, and his poetical demagogy is naively expressed in the following lines:—

> That, from dependence and from pride secure,
> I am not placed so high to scorn the poor,
> Nor yet so low that I "my lord" should fear,
> Or hesitate to give him sneer for sneer;
> That, whilst sage Prudence my pursuits confirms,
> I can enjoy the world on equal terms;
> That kind to others, to myself most true,
> Feeling no want, I comfort those who do,
> And with the will have power to aid distress;
> These and what other blessings I possess,
> From the indulgence of the public rise;
> All private patronage my soul defies.
> By candour more inclined to save than damn,
> A generous public made me what I am.
> All that I have they gave; just memory bears
> The grateful stamp, and what I am is theirs.[1]

He continued to assail the age, as if occupying a moral position superior to it, in *Independence*, *The Farewell*, and *The Journey*. The last of these works he left unpublished, before proceeding to France on a visit to

[1] *The Conference*, 137-152.

Wilkes. Starting for Boulogne on the 27th of October. 1764, he was seized with a miliary fever, of which he died in that place on the 4th of November, being not yet thirty-three years old. His body was brought to Dover and buried in the churchyard of St. Martin's.

In the inscription now placed on Churchill's tombstone[1] is the italicised line of the following passage:—

> And when, on travel bound, some rhyming guest
> Roams through the churchyard, whilst his dinner's drest,
> Let it hold up this comment to his eyes—
> *Life to the last enjoyed here Churchill lies;*
> Whilst (O, what joy that pleasing flattery gives!)
> Reading my Works, he cries,—Here Churchill lives.[2]

When leaving England in 1816, Byron fulfilled the first half of this prophecy, and commemorated it in *Churchill's Grave*; but it is melancholy to think that in the second half the poet's expectations should have been disappointed. The modern reader cannot study his satires without perceiving that the life has died out of them. This is not the result of want of genius; everywhere in this satirist's work we see the *disjecti membra poetae.* The neglect into which it has fallen is due to his want of judgment and artistic skill, a failure to understand how much in satire depends upon the proper selection of materials, their skilful arrangement, and the just distribution of light and shade. "Thou, Nature, art my Goddess,"[3] Churchill exclaims with Shakespeare's Edmund; but he did not see that Nature in Art required to be exhibited under a veil; he was therefore unable to appreciate the poetic qualities of Pope, and affected to despise them:—

> In polished numbers and majestic sound,
> When shall thy rival, Pope, be ever found?
> But whilst each line with equal beauty flows,
> E'en excellence, unvaried, tedious grows.
> Nature, through all her works, in great degree,
> Borrows a blessing from variety.[4]

[1] It was not there in 1816.
[2] *The Candidate.*
[3] *The Prophecy of Famine*, 93.
[4] *The Apology*, 366-371.

To be insensible to the great variety of means by which Pope produces his finished effects argues a bluntness of critical perception. On the other hand, Dryden is held up as a model of art, and Churchill's appreciation of his master's qualities is excellent:—

> Here let me bend, great Dryden, at thy shrine,
> Thou dearest name to all the tuneful nine.
> What if some dull lines in cold order creep,
> And with his theme the poet seems to sleep?
> Still, when his subject rises proud to view,
> With equal strength the poet rises too;
> With strong invention, noblest vigour fraught,
> Thought still springs up, and rises out of thought;
> Numbers, ennobling numbers in their course,
> In varied sweetness flow, in varied force;
> The powers of genius and of judgment join,
> And the whole Art of Poetry is thine.[1]

But in taking Dryden for his model, the scholar neglected to imitate him in the most essential of all his characteristics. In Churchill the *subject* never "rises proud to view." An absurd caricature of Scotland and her inhabitants; an invective against Hogarth for his satiric portrait of Wilkes; an interminable diatribe against Sandwich; perpetual assertions of his own honesty and independence: these are the kind of themes with which Churchill in his Satires seeks to interest posterity. Dryden rarely cares to speak about himself; when he does, as in *The Hind and the Panther*, he does it in such a manner as to heighten his general effects. Churchill is as egotistic as Pope, but he seldom knows how, like that unrivalled artist, to atone for his seeming arrogance by posing as the *representative* of a great public cause. His earliest satires, *The Rosciad* and *The Apology*, in which he attends to this principle, are by far his best. In the latter he says:—

> The stage I chose—a subject fair and free;
> 'Tis yours, 'tis mine—'tis public property.
> All common exhibitions open lie
> For praise or censure to the common eye
> *Hence are a thousand hackney writers fed;*
> Hence monthly critics earn their daily bread.

[1] *The Apology*, 376 387.

This is a general tax which all must pay,
From those who scribble down to those who play.
Actors, a venal crew, receive support
From public bounty for the public sport.
To clap or hiss all have an equal claim,
The cobbler's and his lordship's right the same.
All join for their subsistence; all expect
Free leave to praise their worth, their faults correct.[1]

Though the persons of such famous actors as Quin and Garrick, Mrs. Clive and Mrs. Pritchard, are to us, no doubt, only *magni nominis umbrae*, it is still interesting to study the lively images their acting produced in the mind of a man of genius like Churchill. But in what sense can the quarrel of Wilkes and Martin, or the frauds of the girl Parsons—celebrated with tedious prolixity in *The Duellist* and *The Ghost*—be called "public property"? What does it signify to the modern reader whether or not "Black Smith of Trinity" was at the head of the academical party which supported Lord Sandwich in his candidature for the High Stewardship of Cambridge University?[2]

Even details like these, however, might have been clothed with human interest, if Churchill could have presented them in an ideal framework. But he wanted imagination and invention, or at least industry, to work out his often happy inspirations. *The Prophecy of Famine* is founded on a good idea, but beyond the fine description of the Cave of Famine, there are few memorable lines in the poem. The *Epistle to William Hogarth* does not preserve the epistolary form, and is confused in its arrangement; all the first part being either an address, not to Hogarth, but to Candour, or an apostrophe to the poet himself. Churchill's lack of art is most apparent in *The Candidate*. The fact of such a reprobate as Sandwich offering himself as the representative of an ancient and illustrious seat of learning, afforded an excellent satiric theme, suited to the keen irony of Pope; but Churchill could only wield the bludgeon, and from his 800 lines of

[1] *The Apology*, 195-199. [2] *The Candidate*, 615-620.

invective against Wilkes' treacherous friend, it would be difficult to select a passage worth quoting.

It is the same with his diction. When he chose to take pains, he could be admirably pointed and antithetical. We find couplets like these:—

> Fools that we are, like Israel's fools of yore,
> The calf ourselves have fashioned we adore.
> But let true Reason once resume her reign,
> The god shall sink into a calf again.

And

> The surest road to health, say what they will,
> Is never to suppose we shall be ill.

And the lines that frightened Garrick:—

> Let the vain tyrant sit amidst his guards,
> His puny green-room wits and venal bards,
> Who meanly tremble at the puppet's frown,
> And for a play-house freedom lose their own;
> In spite of new-made laws, and new-made kings,
> The free-born Muse with liberal spirit sings
> Bow down, ye slaves! before these idols fall!
> Let Genius stoop to them who've none at all!
> Ne'er will I flatter, cringe, or bend the knee
> To those who, slaves to all, are slaves to me.

The turn of the last couplet is clearly a reminiscence of Pope:—

> Yes! *I am* proud, I must be proud, to see
> *Men not afraid of God, afraid of me*

And indeed all through Churchill's work we observe the influence exercised on him by a master whom he was presumptuous enough to despise. The admirable opening couplet in the passage that follows is Popian. Unfortunately its energetic effect is destroyed by the long protraction of the period—after Churchill's manner, when he supposes himself to be imitating Dryden—ending in a complete anticlimax:—

> May I (can worse disgrace on manhood fall?)
> Be born a Whitehead, and baptized a Paul;
> May I (though to His service deeply tied
> By sacred oaths, and now by will allied)

With false feigned zeal an injured God defend,
And use His name for some base private end;
May I (that thought bids double horrors roll
O'er my sick spirits, and unmans my soul)
Ruin the virtue which I held most dear,
And still must hold; may I, through abject fear,
Betray my friend; may to succeeding times,
Engraved on plates of adamant, my crimes
Stand blazing forth, while marked with envious blot,
Each little act of virtue is forgot;
Of all those evils which, to stamp men curst,
Hell keeps in store for vengeance, may the worst
Light on my head; and in my day of woe,
To make the cup of bitterness o'erflow,
May I be scorned by every man of worth,
Wander like Cain, a vagabond on earth,
Bearing about a hell in my own mind,
Or be to Scotland for my life confined;
If I am one among the many known,
Whom Shelburne fled, and Calcraft blushed to own.[1]

Johnson was perhaps somewhat unjust to Churchill in the witty sentence recorded by Boswell:—

Sir, I called the fellow a blockhead at first, and I will call him a blockhead still. However, I will acknowledge that I have a better opinion of him now than I once had; for he has shown more fertility than I expected. To be sure, he is a tree that cannot produce good fruit; he only bears crabs. But, Sir, a tree that produces a great many crabs is better than a tree which produces only a few.[2]

Churchill should rather be compared to those wild trees spoken of by Virgil, which by the gift of nature are, with pruning and culture, capable of bearing fruit both abundant and good.[3] But pruning and culture were arts with which Churchill thought that he could dispense; hence, as a satirist, he did not rise above the rank of Oldham, whom

[1] *The Conference*, 271-294.
[2] Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, chap. xvi. 1763.
[3] Compare Virg. *Georg.* lib. ii. 47-56:

Sponte sua quae se tollunt in luminis auras,
Infecunda quidem, sed laeta et fortia, surgunt:
Quippe solo natura subest. Tamen haec quoque si quis
Inserat, aut scrobibus mandet mutata subactis,
Exuerint silvestrem animum, cultuque frequenti
In quascunque voces artes haud tarda sequentur.

he resembles in many points both of his career and his character, though the total effect of his work is different. Both were inflamed by a common passion for poetry and independence; both turned aside from their early professions to seek a maintenance by means of literature; both died an early death.[1] They may each be described as poetical demagogues; Oldham taking advantage of the public fury in the Popish Plot, and Churchill of the popular infatuation about Wilkes. They were alike "by too much force betrayed." Oldham was the superior in imagination, invention, and judgment; Churchill in largeness of vocabulary and command of metrical effect: their qualities united would have produced first-rate satire; but this end was not attained by either, because the one did not understand that wit was incomplete unless supplemented with harmony, and the other that it would be wasted without proper direction.

Churchill was the last satirist of the line of Dryden and Pope, in whose work the ethical element is combined with the political. Inferior as he is to his predecessors, he still upholds in his verse the great satiric ideal first set forth by Pope, as a member of the Opposition in Walpole's age:—

O sacred weapon! left for truth's defence,
Sole dread of folly, vice, and insolence!
To all but heaven-directed hands denied,
The Muse may give thee, but the gods must guide.
Reverent I touch thee! but with honest zeal,
To rouse the watchmen of the public weal,
To virtue's work provoke the tardy hall,
And goad the prelate slumbering in his stall.[2]

But in the following generation political satire dwindles into the avowed weapon of faction. In the years between 1783 and 1788 the two most prominent men in England were Warren Hastings and William Pitt the younger. Hastings at that period had just laid the firm foundations

[1] For an account of Oldham, see vol. iii. pp. 497-505.
[2] *Epilogue to the Satires*, Dialogue ii.

of England's Indian Empire, and in doing so had incurred responsibility for actions that called for the intervention of the English Parliament. Charles Fox, having formed a political coalition with Lord North, introduced a Bill for the government of India which, if it had passed into an Act, would have brought the Crown into subjection to the Whig Party, by absorbing all the patronage of the East India Company. Perceiving the object of the measure, the King used his influence to have it rejected by the House of Lords, and almost immediately afterwards exercised his constitutional right of dismissing his Ministers. In their place he summoned Pitt to form a Ministry, and the latter, after accomplishing this task, contrived, by splendid strategy, in the face of an infuriated Opposition commanding a majority of the House of Commons, to carry on the Government till the fitting moment arrived for a Dissolution of Parliament. In the new Parliament he was made by the electorate master of the situation; and all that was left to the Whigs was to avenge themselves in one of the most entertaining political satires in the English language.

It is not too much to say that any reader, who will take the trouble to master the details of *The Rolliad*, will be able to obtain for himself a more vivid conception of the actual life and feeling of English political warfare in the decade preceding the outbreak of the French Revolution than he could get from the narrative of the most accurate historian or the most brilliant essayist. The satire was the work of a confederacy of Whig wits of whom the chief were Fox's most intimate friend the able Richard Fitzpatrick (1747-1813), Sheridan's *protégé* Richard Tickell, author of *Anticipation*, a descendant of Addison's eulogist and Pope's rival translator (1751-1793), and Joseph Richardson, M.P. for Newport (1755-1803), another friend of Sheridan. The contributions to the satire were made after the model of the Scriblerus Club, and the unity of the general design was most artistically preserved. *Criticisms on the Rolliad* began to appear in *The Morning Post* in the latter part of 1784, and when this vein was exhausted, the satire was continued

in *Political Eclogues* and *Probationary Odes*, etc, through 1785.

The Rolliad makes no pretence to those motives of ethical indignation which are professed in the satires of Churchill; it goes far beyond the latter in the minuteness of its scandalous chronicle and the virulence of its party and personal allusions. On the other hand, it furnishes an artistic justification for the pettiness of its details in the excellence of its form. This was evidently suggested by the ironical commentary of Martinus Scriblerus on *The Dunciad*, but is adapted to suit the new fashion of periodical criticism to which the public had become accustomed in *The Monthly* and *The Critical Reviews*. An epic poem called *The Rolliad* is supposed to exist, the beauties of which are set forth in a succession of papers, after the manner of Addison's essays in *The Spectator* on *Paradise Lost*. While the nominal hero of the epic is Rollo, Duke of Normandy, the *Criticisms* are for the most part concentrated on a single episode, in which Merlin reveals to the hero the future feats and fame of his descendant, John Rolle, member for Devonshire—notorious for his interruptions of Burke when speaking—and of his allies on the Ministerial side of the House of Commons. Extracts from the non-existent poem are made in the successive papers, whenever the critic desires to satirise a leading supporter of Pitt. The pleasantry of the attacks is admirable, and on the whole, considering the heated state of the atmosphere,[1] the limits of decency and good breeding are fairly observed. But no personal weakness in the victims, no damaging insinuation, is passed over by these relentless partisans. The actions, characters, and even the appearance of the leading combatants, are brought before us in vivid verse from the very opening of the

[1] *Horace Walpole says in a letter to Sir Horace Mann*, dated 12th March 1784: "Politics have engrossed all conversation, and stifled other events, if any have happened . . . Indeed our ladies, who used to contribute to enliven conversation are become politicians, and, as Lady Townley says, 'squeeze a little too much lemon into conversation' They have been called back a little to their own profession—dress, by a magnificent ball which the Prince of Wales gave two nights ago to near six hundred persons, to which the amazons of both parties were invited, and not a scratch was given or received!"

conflict. We see Lord Temple claiming his right as Privy Councillor to advise his Majesty in private audience, before the introduction of Fox's India Bill into the House of Lords:—

On the great day when Buckingham by pairs
Ascended, Heaven-impelled, the K——'s back stairs;
And panting, breathless, strained his lungs to show
From Fox's Bill what mighty ills would flow;
That soon, *its source corrupt, Opinion's thread*
On India deleterious streams would shed;[1]
That Hastings, Munny Begum, Scott, must fall,
And Pitt, and Jenkinson, and Leadenhall:
Still as with stammering tongue he told his tale,
Unusual terrors Brunswick's heart assail;
Wide starts his white wig from his royal ear,
And each particular hair stands stiff with fear.

We see the burly form of William Grenville—Joint Paymaster of the Forces with Lord Mulgrave in the new Government—and Sydney the Lord Chamberlain:—

Sydney whom all the powers of rhetoric grace,
Consistent Sydney, fills Fitzwilliam's place.
O had by Nature but proportioned been
His strength of genius to his length of chin,
His mighty mind in some prodigious plan
At once with ease had reached to Indostan.

The Marquis of Graham, son of the Duke of Montrose, said in the House in answer to the speech of some Opposition member, that, "if his honourable friend were justly called a goose, he supposed he must be a gosling." The satirist at once seized the opportunity:—

If right the Bard whose numbers sweetly flow,
That all our knowledge is ourselves to know,
A sage like Graham can the world produce,
Who in full senate called himself a goose?
Th' admiring Commons from the high-born youth
With wonder heard this undisputed truth;
Exulting Glasgow claimed him for her own,
And placed the prodigy on Learning's throne.

And in the later *Political Eclogues* he returned to the subject:—

[1] The mixture of metaphors in Hastings' Despatches is a fruitful source of satire for the authors of *The Rolliad*.

His friend, the heir apparent of Montrose,
Feels for his beak, and starts to find a nose.[1]

Sometimes the satire is more severe. The Duke of Richmond, Master General of the Ordnance, whose stinginess was a by-word, having introduced a measure for the land fortification of the country, was saluted as follows:—

Hail! thou, for either talent justly known,
To spend the nation's cash, or keep thy own;
Expert alike to save or be profuse,
As money goes for thine, or England's use;
In whose esteem of equal worth are thought
A public million and a private groat,
Hail! and—etc.

It was more difficult to select the weak point for attack in the Prime Minister. The satirist's strokes were mainly directed against his youth, his recognised virtue, and his finance, especially his reduction of the duty on tea. The following may be taken as a sample of the *Criticisms* on him both in verse and prose:—

We shall conclude this number, as the poet concludes the subject, with some animated verses on Mr Fox and Mr Pitt

Crown the froth'd Porter, slay the fatted Ox,
And give the British meal to British Fox
But, for an Indian Minister more fit,
Ten cups of purest Padrac pour for Pitt,
Pure as himself, add sugar too and cream,
Sweet as his temper,[2] bland as flows the stream
Of his smooth eloquence, then crisply nice
The muffin toast, or bread and butter slice,
Thin as his arguments that mock the mind,
Gone ere you taste, no relish left behind
Where beauteous Brighton overlooks the sea,
These be his joys, and Steele shall make the Tea.[3]

[1] *Political Eclogues Charles Jenkinson*, 93 94

[2] No doubt alluding to Sheridan's retort about the "Angry [illegible] Pitt, with bad taste, sneered at him for his connection with th[illegible]

[3] Thomas Steele was Joint Secretary to the Treasury [illegible] in Pitt's first Ministry. Pitt was in the habit of going [illegible] when the House was not sitting.

How neat! how delicate! and how unexpected is the allusion in the last couplet! These two lines alone include the substance of whole columns, in the ministerial papers of last summer, on the sober, the chaste, the virtuous, the edifying manner in which the Immaculate Young Man passed the recess from public business. Not in riot and debauchery, not in gaming, not in attendance on ladies, either modest or immodest, but in drinking Tea with Mr. Steele at the castle in Brighthelmstone. Let future ages read and admire.

With the East India Company itself *The Rolliad* keeps no measure, as the following extract will show:—

The poet then hints at a most ingenious proposal for the embellishment of the India bench[1] according to the new plan of Parliamentary Reform; not by fitting it up like the Treasury bench with velvet cushions, but by erecting, for the accommodation of the Leadenhall worthies, the ivory bed which was lately presented to her Majesty by Mrs. Hastings—

O that for you, in Oriental State,
At ease reclined to watch the long debate,
Beneath the gallery's pillared height were spread
(With the Queen's leave) your Warren's ivory bed!

The pannels of the gallery too, over the canopy of the bed, are to be ornamented with suitable paintings—

Above, in colours warm with mimic life,
The German husband of your Warren's wife
His rival's deed should blazon; and display
In his blest rule the glories of your sway.

What singular propriety, what striking beauty must the reader of taste immediately perceive in this choice of a painter to execute the author's design! It cannot be doubted but Mrs. Hastings would exert all her own private and all Major Scott's public influence with *every* branch of the Legislature, to obtain so illustrious a job for the man to whose affection, or to whose want of affection, she owes her present fortunes. The name of this artist is Imhoff; but though he was once honoured with the Royal Patronage, he is now best remembered from the circumstance, by which our author has distinguished him, of his former relation to Mrs. Hastings.[2]

[1] The members who represented the interests of the Company in the House were called the Bengal Squad, and sat behind Ministers.

[2] *i.e.* he was husband to Marian Imhoff, afterwards Mrs. Hastings. There was a certain amount of mystery about the way in which the divorce from Imhoff was obtained.

Then follow the subjects of the painting, which are selected with the usual judgment of our poet:—

Here might the tribes of Rohilcund expire,
And quench with blood their towns that sink in fire;
The Begums there, of power, of wealth forlorn,
With female cries their hapless fortune mourn.
Here, hardly rescued from his guard, Cheyt Sing
Aghast should fly; and Nundcomar should swing:
Happy for him! if he had borne to see
His country beggared of the last rupee;
Nor called those laws, oh Hastings, on thy head,
Which, mocked by thee, thy slaves alone should dread!

Equally unscrupulous and witty was the attack made by Fitzpatrick, author of the "Political Eclogue" called *The Liars*, on Pitt's most intimate friends. In this satire George Pretyman (afterwards Bishop Tomline), Canon of Salisbury, Pitt's private secretary, and Mr. Banks, M.P. for Corfe Castle, are represented, striving in amœbean fashion to outdo each other in the arts of mendacity:—

PRETYMAN

[illegible]

BANKS

[illegible]

And, heard by hundreds, is believed, of course.

PRETYMAN

Search through each office for the basest tool,
Reared in Jack [illegible]

Not Rose,[1] from all restraints of conscience free,
In double dealing is a match for me

[1] George Rose, Joint-Secretary of the Treasury with Thomas Steele.

BANKS

Step from St. Stephen's up to Leadenhall,
Where Europe's crimes appear no crimes at all;
Not Major Scott,[1] with bright pagodas paid,
That wholesale dealer in the lying trade;
Not he, howe'er important his design,
Can lie with impudence surpassing mine.

Entertaining, and even historically valuable, as all this is,[2] it must be admitted that in it Satire has sunk to a lower level than when Pope made use of it as an instrument for scourging Walpole's system of Parliamentary Corruption. The vices assailed have ceased to be national, in any wide sense of the word; the scene of action has shrunk within the walls of the House of Commons; the conflict represented is merely the struggle for *influence* between the Sovereign and the great Revolution Houses; and Fox's cynical avowal that "Men not Measures" formed the aim of his policy, finds an echo in the bitter personalities with which the authors of *The Rolliad* endeavour to degrade the characters of their political opponents.

But the decline of Satire in ethical quality, with its increasing tendency to become unreservedly personal and scandalous, is yet more vividly illustrated in the writings of the lampooner calling himself Peter Pindar. In the *Anti-Jacobin Review* the works of this man are thus solemnly denounced:—

Our readers may probably have traced the progress of Peter from his first entrance into public life: they may have remarked the profligate priest, whose conversation exhibits a disgusting mixture of obscenity and blasphemy; they may have heard of his mischievous disposition when the obscure resident of a country town, employed in libelling his neighbours, and descending to the most mean and paltry arts for a subsistence; they may

[1] Hastings' chief agent and supporter in the House of Commons.

[2] A good edition of *The Rolliad* is still required. The various allusions may, for the most part, be explained with the aid of Wraxall's *Memoirs* and other contemporary writings.

have followed him to town, endeavouring to live on the talents of a man whom he ostentatiously affected to patronise, under the express condition of receiving one-half of the produce of his labours; they may have watched him in his subsequent attempts to obtain notoriety and wealth by bribing the servants of his Sovereign to betray their trust, to reveal his family secrets, and to express all those little foibles from which no man upon earth is exempt, in order to render them objects of public derision and scorn; recollecting, no doubt, that the regicides of France attempted to render their Sovereign ridiculous before they ventured to murder him; they may have marked his progress from seditious to treasonable insinuations, in recommending it to subjects occasionally to behead their monarchs; they may have noted the invariable tendency of his works to depreciate worth and to calumniate virtue, not only forgetting, but absolutely perverting, the very object of satire—the correction of vice; and they may, lastly, have heard of his base acceptance of a salary from that Government which he had incessantly vilified, to write in opposition to the very men whose principles and conduct he had invariably praised. A recollection of these facts would, we should apprehend, suffice to check a *smile*, and to justify any expression of surprise that the world *smile* at *such* productions of *such* a Bard. We confess it appears to us that any readers who were apprised of these circumstances, and could smile, must not only sympathise with the feelings, but favour the principles of the man; proofs of a weak head and a bad heart.[1]

Such contemptuous invective against a writer whose actions are so minutely chronicled seems to be somewhat overdone, and the perplexity, pretended by Mathias, Gifford, and others, to understand why this person should have assumed the name of Pindar, which he had of course taken for burlesque purposes, is obviously affected. Peter deserved, nevertheless, all the chastisement that he received, and if he is noticed in these pages, it is only because his work, however low, has a certain genuine humour and character which makes it representative, and which caused it to exercise an influence on the style of a later and greater satirist.

John Wolcot was born at Dodbrooke, near Kingsbridge, and was baptized on the 9th of May 1738. After receiving his education in the grammar school at Kings-

[1] *Anti-Jacobin Review*, vol. iv. pp. 325-326.

bridge he was apprenticed to his uncle, who was a surgeon at Fowey in Cornwall and acted as his guardian on his father's death in 1751.

In 1760 he was sent to France for twelve months to study the language, and acquired there a great dislike to the French, which he afterwards expressed in his satires. Returning to England in 1762, he went to London to study medicine, and then came to assist his uncle in his practice at Fowey, where he stayed till 1767, in which year he accompanied Sir William Trelawney, as physician, when the latter was appointed Governor of Jamaica. As there was a prospect of the rich living of St. Anne's, in that island, becoming vacant, Wolcot returned to England, and, in the hope of securing the preferment, was ordained deacon on the 24th of June 1769, and priest on the following day; but on arriving again at Jamaica he found that the incumbent of St. Anne's had recovered. Trelawney gave him the living of Vere in Jamaica, which he held, but continued at the same time to practise as a physician.

In 1773 he came back to England and resumed the practice of medicine at Truro. He is said also to have inherited his uncle's property at Fowey, but having quarrelled with and satirised the Corporation of Truro, he was obliged in 1779 to remove to Helston. In his youth he had shown some talent as a painter, and, while going his rounds as a country doctor, he discovered the genius of Opie, then working as a common carpenter. Wolcot treated the latter with much liberality, had him instructed, and established him at Exetèr. Coming to London in 1781, he persuaded Opie to follow him, but, whether for the reason hinted at in the *Anti-Jacobin* or for some other cause, he afterwards quarrelled with him.

His earliest satires (published in 1782) were written against West and other members of the Royal Academy, patronised by the King. He afterwards began to satirise the King himself, ridiculing particularly his parsimonious habits, his ignorance of common things, and his oddities of speech. It does not appear that Wolcot had any share in the composition of *The Rolliad*, but, like the

authors of that satire, he took advantage of the appointment of Thomas Warton to the Laureateship in 1785 to make fun of the King. His own *Odes* and his imaginary conversations with the Laureate, published in 1787, are the most entertaining of his compositions, and were very widely read. It is said that he received the offer of a pension to keep him quiet. In 1788 the King's mental malady and the outburst of loyal feeling, called forth by the subsequent events of the French Revolution, caused Peter's personalities to be regarded with resentment and disgust, feelings which were intensified by a satire called *Nil Admirari*, written by him in 1799 in ridicule of the respectable and inoffensive Hannah More. After this his name sank into obscurity, from which it was only dragged in 1807 by criminal proceedings in the Court of King's Bench, in which he was accused of adultery, but was acquitted. He died on the 14th of January 1819, and was buried in St. Paul's Church, Covent Garden, and, by his own request, at the side of Butler, author of *Hudibras*

Peter Pindar may be described as a degenerate successor of Andrew Marvell. Like the Republican satirist, he took for the object of his lampoons the manners of his Sovereign: like him, the effect of his satire was produced by contrasting the panegyrics of the Court poets with the facts of actual life. But here the resemblance ended, and the difference between the two writers is an interesting historical illustration of the change that the lapse of a century had produced in the social life of England. The manners of the Court of Charles II. were a national scandal: the domestic life of George III. was in essentials above reproach, and all that Peter Pindar endeavoured to ridicule in it was a certain meanness of expenditure unbecoming to Royalty, and some grotesque personal habits in the Monarch calculated to lower the reverence naturally surrounding a King. There was a corresponding contrast in the characters of the satirists. Marvell was a man of religion and good standing, whose libels reflected the public spirit of Englishmen Wolcot was a graceless debauchee, who sought to gratify the curiosity

of the vulgar with such gossip about the Court as he could buy from the servants' hall.

When these deductions have been made from the quality of his satire, it must be allowed that he was a man of brilliant talents. Whatever airs of moral disapprobation may have been fitting in the critic of the *Anti-Jacobin Review*, it is impossible for the modern reader not to "smile" at Peter Pindar's humour before he dulled it by constant repetition. The grave irony with which he sustains the character of a discriminating panegyrist of Royalty, in opposition to the official flattery required of the Court poets, is inimitable, as may be seen from the following dialogue between himself and the Laureate:—

T. W.[1]

Think'st thou not Cæsar doth the arts possess?

P. P.

Arts in abundance! Yes, Tom—yes, Tom—yes!

T. W.

Think'st thou not Cæsar would each joy forgo
To make his children happy?

P. P.

No, Tom—no!

T. W.

What! not *one* bag, to bless a child bestow?

P. P.

Heaven help thy folly! No, Tom—no, Tom—no!
The sordid souls that avarice enslaves,
Would gladly grasp their guineas in their graves:
Like that old Greek, a miserable cur,
Who made himself his own executor.

A cat is with her kittens much delighted;
She licks so lovingly their mouths and chins;
At every danger, lord! how puss is frighted—
She curves her back, and curls her tail, and grins,
Rolls her wild eyes, and claws the backs of curs,
Who smell too curious at her children's furs.

---

[1] *i.e.* Thomas Warton.

This happens whilst her cats are young indeed;
But when *grown up*, alas! how changed their luck!
No more she plays at bo-peep with her breed,
Lies down, and mewing, bids them come and suck;

No more she sports and pats them, frisks and purrs,
Plays with their twinkling tails, and licks their furs,
But when they beg her blessing and embraces,
Spits, like a dirty vixen, in their faces.[1]

Peter is always happiest in his similes. Here is another piece of animal painting worthy of Ariosto:—

"What king hath small religion?" thou repliest.
If G—— the Th—— thou meanest—bard, thou liest?"
Hold, Thomas!—not so furious—I know things
That add not to the piety of ——.
I've seen a K—— at chapel, I declare,
Yawn, gape, laugh, in the middle of a prayer—
When inward his sad optics ought to roll,
To view the dark condition of his soul;
Catch up an opera glass with curious eye,
Forgetting God, some stranger's phiz to spy,
As though desirous to observe if Heaven
Had Christian features to the visage given;
Then turn (for kind communication keen)
And tell some new-found wonders to the Queen.

Thus have these eyes beheld a cock so stately
(Indeed these lyric eyes beheld one lately)
Lab'ring upon a dunghill with each knuckle:
When after many a peck, and scratch, and scrub,
This hunter did unkennel a poor grub;
On which the fellow did so strut and chuckle;
He pecked and squinted—pecked and kenned again,
Hallooing lustily to *Mother Hen*;
To whom with airs of triumph he looked round,
And told what noble treasure he had found.

The King's peculiarities of speech are mimicked to make him satirise his own avarice, as in the following conversation which he is supposed to hold with Pitt:—

To whom a certain sage so earnest cried:
"Don't mind, don't mind—the rogues their aim have missed.
Don't fear your place whilst I am well supplied—
But mind, mind poverty of Civil List.

[1] *Ode upon Ode*

Swear that no K—g's so poor upon the globe!
Compare me—yes, compare me to poor Job.
What, what, Pitt—heh? We must have t'other grant—
What, what? You know, Pitt, that my old dead Aunt[1]
Left not a sixpence, Pitt, these eyes to bless,
But from the parish saved that fool at Hesse.

But mind me—heh? to plague her heart when dying,
I was a constant hunter—Nimrod still;
And when in state, as dead's a mackerel lying,
I cared not, for I knew the woman's *Will*."

The droll impudence of Peter Pindar's lampoons was unquestionably original, and only became nauseous because the satirist did not know where to stop. His secret lay in applying a colloquial idiom and Hudibrastic rhymes to the serious rhythms of iambic verse, and, independently of his own cleverness, his methods are deserving of record, as having obviously furnished an early model of satiric style to Byron in *Don Juan.* Stanzas, like the following, present the first example of the manner in which the greater poet, following Frere, acclimatised the effects of Italian burlesque in English *ottava rima*:—

Knights, who when tumbled on the hostile field,
And to an enemy obliged to yield,
Could neither leg, nor arm, nor neck, nor nob stir:
Poor devils who, like alligators hacked,
At length by hammers, hatchets, sledges, cracked,
Were dragged from coats of armour like a lobster.[2]

Or

Now God preserve all wonder-seeking Kings,
Whether at Windsor, Buckingham, or Kew House,
And may they never do more foolish things,
Than visiting Sam Whitbread and his brew-house.[3]

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[1] The Princess Amelia left £400,000.
[2] *Ode upon Ode.* [3] *Instructions to a Celebrated Laureate.*

CHAPTER IX

TRANSLATIONS OF THE CLASSICS IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

CREECH'S TRANSLATIONS; ROWE'S *LUCAN*; POPE'S *ILIAD*; POPE'S, FENTON'S, AND BROOME'S *ODYSSEY*, PITT'S *VIRGIL* AND *VIDA'S ART OF POETRY*, GILBERT WEST'S *PINDAR*.

NOW that I have completed my survey of the effects of the Classical Renaissance on the original English Poetry that followed the Revolution of 1688, it will be convenient to illustrate briefly the strength of the movement in the chief translations by Englishmen of the Greek and Roman poets. The period between the Restoration and the end of George II.'s reign is the great age of English poetical translation. Beginning with Creech and Dryden, it may be said to close with Gilbert West, and within these limits are included such brilliant performances as Dryden's translation of *Virgil*, of which I have already spoken, Pope's *Homer*, Rowe's *Lucan*, and Gilbert West's *Pindar*. Some of these translations seem to have been inspired, like those of Creech, mainly by an admiration for the Classics in themselves; others, among which are Rowe's *Pharsalia* and Pitt's *Vida's Art of Poetry*, by a native sympathy between the original author and the translator; while others again, such as Dryden's *Virgil*, were tasks undertaken, with an eye to profit, by great poets, at the instance of booksellers seeking to satisfy the literary curiosity of the public.

Thomas Creech is the most characteristic representative of the first class. His translations cover *Lucretius* (1682); *The Odes, Satyrs, and Epistles of Horace* (1684); Elegies

from *Ovid, and the Second and Third Eclogues of Virgil* (1684); *The Idylliums of Theocritus* (1684); *The Thirteenth Satire of Juvenal* (1693); *Five Books of M. Manilius* (1697). Some of these undertakings were no doubt the fruits of an arrangement with booksellers, but the translation of Lucretius was evidently a labour of love and scholarship; and learned enthusiasm alone can have prompted the rendering into English of so dull a writer as Manilius.

Creech was born at Blandford, in Dorsetshire, in 1659, and was educated by Thomas Curgenven, Rector of Folke, and headmaster of Sherborne School. He was admitted as a commoner into Wadham College in 1675; became scholar of the college in 1676; took his B.A. degree in 1680, and his M.A. in 1683, in which latter year he was also elected a Fellow. In 1696 he took the degree of B.D. Between 1694 and 1696 he was headmaster of Sherborne, and towards the end of his time there he began to exhibit symptoms of mental derangement. His malady increased in violence after he had resigned his mastership. In 1699 he was appointed by his college Rector of Welwyn, but he never resided there, and, becoming quite insane, he committed suicide in 1700. Though this act has been sometimes imputed to his study of Lucretius, it appears to have been in reality the result partly of a disappointment in love, and partly of money difficulties.

Creech belongs to the literal school of translators, approved of by Ben Jonson, of which, before his day, Thomas May is the chief representative. His most important translations are those of Horace and Lucretius. As a poetical translator of Horace, whose merit depends so much on felicity of form, he had not many qualifications. He says of himself in his preface:—

I cannot choose but smile now and then to think that I who have not music enough to understand one note, and too little ill-nature (for that is commonly thought a necessary ingredient) to be a satirist, should venture upon Horace: 'tis certain our language is not capable of the numbers of the poet, and therefore, if the sense of the author is delivered, the variety of expression

kept (which I must despair of after Quintilian hath assured us that he is most happily bold in his words), and his fancy not debased (for I cannot think myself able to improve Horace), 'tis all that can be expected from a version.

And again, after citing Cowley's remarks on the change of manners since Pindar's time, Creech says:—

'Tis true he improves this consideration, and urges it as concluding against all strict and faithful versions: in which I must beg leave to dissent, thinking it better to convey down the learning of the Ancients, than their empty sound suited to the present times, and show the age their whole substance, rather than their ghost embodied with some light air of my own.

Pope cites the two first lines of Creech's translation of Horace Epistles i. vi. in his own Epistle to Murray; but few of Creech's renderings of Horace's Odes will bear quoting. The sense is generally accurately conveyed in them, but they have no beauty of form, and the translator sometimes permits himself, in the middle of an ode, to depart from the measure he has chosen. The translation of the *Ode to Torquatus* is a favourable specimen of his work;[1] it will be observed, however, that though Creech uses a ten-syllable and eight-syllable metre, he cannot compress his version into so few lines as Horace:—

The snows are gone, and grass returns again;
  New leaves adorn the widow trees·
The unswoln streams their narrow banks contain,
  And softly roll to quiet seas.

The decent nymphs, with smiling graces joined,
  Now naked dance i' th' open air;
They dread no blasts, nor fear the wind,
  That wantons through their flowing hair.

The nimble Hour, that turns the circling year,
  And swiftly whirls the pleasing day,
Forewarns thee to be mortal in thy care,
  Nor cramp thy life with long delay.

[1] Horace, *Odes*, iv. vii.

The Spring the Winter, Summer wastes the Spring,
And Summer's beauty's quickly lost,
When drunken Autumn spreads her drooping wing,
And next cold Winter creeps in frost.

The moon, 'tis true, her monthly loss repairs,
She straight renews her borrowed light;
But when black Death hath turned our shining years,
Then follows our eternal Night.

When we shall view the gloomy Stygian shore,
And walk amongst the mighty dead,
Where Tullus, where Æneas went before,
We shall be dust and empty shade.

Who knows if stubborn fate will prove so kind,
And join to this another day?
Whate'er is for thy greedy heir designed
Will slip his hands and fly away.

When thou art gone, and Minos' sentence read,
Torquatus, there is no return;
Thy fame, nor all thy learned tongue can plead,
Nor goodness, shall unseal the urn.

For chaste Hippolytus Diana strives;
She strives, but ah! she strives in vain:
Nor Theseus' care, nor pious force reprieves
His dear Pirithous from the chain.

Lucretius was a poet more likely than Horace to call forth such powers as Creech possessed. A large part of the Latin poet's subject is fitter for expression in prose than in verse; and, on the other hand, the numerous passages of dialectic and satire in the *De Rerum Natura* were capable of being rendered in the English heroic couplet, which, as treated by Dryden, had acquired a high degree of polish and flexibility. Lucretius' thought also was so grand in itself that, except in the translation of a stupid man—and Creech was no fool—it could not sink to a low level. Creech had indeed none of the poetic fire of his original, but he was a good scholar, and had a fair command of metre, so that his translation is always readable. If the following passage had not to stand comparison with Dryden's rendering,[1] it would be allowed to possess considerable merit:—

[1] See Dryden's Translation of the Latter Part of the Third Book of Lucretius, 121-146.

But now if Nature should begin to speak,
And thus with loud complaints our folly check:
Fond Mortal, what's the matter thou dost sigh?
Why all these fears because thou once must die,
Must once submit to strong mortality?
For if the race thou hast already run
Was pleasant, if with joy thou saw'st the sun;
If all thy pleasures did not pass thy mind,
As through a sieve, but left some sweets behind;
Why dost thou not then, like a thankful guest,
Rise cheerfully from life's abundant feast,
And with a quiet mind go take thy rest?
But if all those delights are lost and gone,
Spilt idly all, and life a burden grown;
Then why, fond mortal, dost thou ask for more,
Why still desire t' increase thy wretched store,
And wish for what must waste like those before?
Not rather free thyself from pains and fear,
And end thy life and necessary care?
My pleasures always in a circle run,
The same returning with the yearly sun.
And thus, though thou shalt still enjoy thy prime,
And though thy limbs feel not the rage of time;
Yet can I find no new, no fresh delight,
The same dull joys must vex the appetite;
Although thou couldst prolong thy wretched breath
For numerous years, much more if free from death,—
What could we answer, what excuses trust?
We must confess that her reproofs are just.

It will be found, on comparison, that Dryden takes greater liberties with the text than Creech allows himself.

Nicholas Rowe (1674-1718) to whom I shall have to refer again in another connection, was a translator of a very different order. Taking up the same task as Thomas May, who, in the reign of Charles I., had rendered Lucan's *Pharsalia* into English on Ben Jonson's principle of literal exactness, Rowe followed Dryden's paraphrastic method, and it is interesting to compare the different results of the two versions. Rowe made his translation in his last years; it was not published till after his death. He seems to have been inspired mainly by a certain literary sympathy of taste with Lucan, as May was by Lucan's political tendencies; but what he admired in his author was not so much the laboured affectation of his diction (that

would have been foreign to the genius of the eighteenth century in England), as the dramatic contrasts of his rhetoric. Where Lucan is solemn and elevated in his sentiment, Rowe falls below him; where he is extravagant, he is not in touch with him; but, in the reproduction of the Latin poet's speeches, his own dramatic genius shines with characteristic lustre. If the reader will examine the following versions of the *Pharsalia* together with those of May, as given in an earlier chapter,[1] he will be able to compare Dryden's principle of translation, applied by a man of genius, with Ben Jonson's, and to test how far the result of either is a fair equivalent of the original.

Rowe's translation of Pompey's dream on the eve of battle, though infinitely superior to May's, does not do justice to the grandeur and pathos of the Latin:—

Pompey, meanwhile, in pleasing visions past
The night, of all his happy nights the last.
It seemed, as if in all his former state,
In his own theatre secure he sate:
About his side unnumbered Romans crowd,
And joyful shout his much-loved name aloud.
The echoing benches seem to ring around,
And his charmed ears devour the pleasing sound
And both himself and such the people seem
In the false prospect of the feigning dream,
As when, in early manhood's beardless bloom,
He stood the darling hope and joy of Rome;
When fierce Sertorius, by his arms supprest,
And Spain subdued, the conqueror confest;
When, raised with honours never known before,
The Consul's purple, yet a youth, he bore:
When the pleased Senate sat with new delight,
To view the triumph of a Roman Knight.[2]

[1] Vol. iii. pp. 327-333.

[2] In the last couplet Rowe has altogether missed the pathos of Lucan's idea, which consists in this, that Pompey saw *himself* in his dream as still a Roman knight sitting in the car of triumph:

Vespere pacato, pura venerabilis aeque
Quam currus ornante toga, plaudente senatu,
Sedit adhuc Romanus eques.

Pharsalia, vii. 17-19.

In describing the death of Lycidas, while May reproduces Lucan's extravagances with prosaic gravity,[1] Rowe's finer classical taste seems to have been bent (in vain) upon softening the absurdities of the original:—

> [illegible]
> [illegible]
> [illegible]
> But that his fellows strove their mate to save;
> Clung to his legs, they clasp him all they can;
> The grappling tugs; asunder flies the man.
> No single wound the gaping rupture seems,
> Where trickling crimson flows in slender streams;
> But from an opening, horrible and wide,
> A thousand vessels pour the bursting tide:
> At once the winding channel's course was broke,
> Where wandering life her mazy journey took:
> At once the currents all forgot their way,
> And lost their purple in the azure sea.
> Soon from the lower parts the spirits fled,
> And motionless exhausted limbs lay dead:
> Not so the nobler regions · there the heart
> And heaving lungs their vital powers exert;
> There, lingering late and long conflicting, life
> Rose against fate, and still maintained the strife:
> Driven out at length, unwillingly and slow,
> She left her mortal house, and sought the shades below

But the speech of the mutineers in Spain—expanded though it is on Dryden's system[2]—is admirable in its dramatic vigour, and forms a striking contrast to May's bald translation:—

> At length 'tis time
> To quit thy cause, oh Cæsar, and our crime.
> The world around for foes thou hast explored,
> And lavishly exposed us to the sword;
> To make thee great a worthless crowd we fall,
> Scattered o'er Spain, and Italy, and Gaul·
> In every clime beneath the spacious sky
> Our leader conquers, and his soldiers die.
> What boots our march beneath the frozen zone,
> Or that lost blood which stains the Rhine and Rhone

[1] See vol. iii. p. 331.

[2] Rowe takes forty-seven lines to translate twenty-nine of Lucan's.

When scarred with wounds, and worn with labours hard,
We come with hopes of recompense prepared,
Thou giv'st us war, more war, for our reward.
Though purple rivers in thy cause we spilt,
And stained our horrid hands in every guilt;
With unavailing wickedness we toiled,
In vain the gods, in vain the senate, spoiled:
Of virtue and reward alike bereft,
Our pious poverty is all we've left.
Say to what height thy daring arms would rise?
If Rome's too little, what can e'er suffice?
Oh, see at length with pity, Cæsar, see
These withering arms, these hairs grown white for thee.
In painful wars our joyless days we've past;
Let weary age lie down in peace at last;
Give us on beds our dying limbs to lay,
And sigh at home our parting souls away.
Nor think it much we make this bold demand,
And ask this wondrous favour at thy hand:
Let our poor babes and weeping wives be by,
To close our drooping eyelids when we die.
Be merciful, and let disease afford
Some other way to die beside the sword.
Let us no more, a common carnage, burn,
But each be laid in his own decent urn.
Still wo't thou urge us, ignorant and blind,
To some more monstrous mischief yet behind?
Are we the only fools, forbid to know
How much we may deserve by one sure blow?
Thy head, thy head, is ours whene'er we please;
Well has thy war inspired such thoughts as these:
What laws, what oaths, can urge their feeble bands
To hinder these determined daring hands?
That Cæsar, who was once ordained our head,
When to the Rhine our lawful arms he led,
Is now no more our chieftain, but our mate:
Guilt equal gives equality of state.[1]

Passing on to Pope's version of Homer's *Iliad*, we find yet another variety of motive in the translators of the eighteenth century. Though Pope was taking up an enterprise which had been begun by Dryden, it is evident that the prospect of gain was the main stimulus which urged him to face so formidable a task.[2] I have described

[1] For May's translation see vol. iii. p. 332.
[2] *Pope's Works* (Elwin and Courthope's edition, vol. v. pp. 150-151).

in an earlier chapter of this History the circumstances under which his work was completed:[1] it remains to show, very shortly, how he developed Dryden's principle of translation, the extent to which either rendering was a satisfactory equivalent for Homer; and what was the effect produced by Pope's version on the style of original English poetry. Fortunately the first two of these points are easily elucidated by a comparison between Pope's performance and Dryden's, in the single book of the *Iliad* that the latter translated. It was the intention of Dryden to have followed his translation of Virgil with a translation of Homer, and indeed he considered himself better qualified for the latter task than for the former; for "the Grecian," said he, "is more according to my genius than the Latin poet." I do not think, myself, that he would have succeeded in the attempt so well as Pope: however, it is plain that both of them proceeded, up to a certain point, on the same lines, which are thus defined by Dryden:—

> The second way is that of paraphrase, or translation with latitude, when the author is kept in view by the translator, so as never to be lost, but his words are not so strictly followed as his sense; and that too is admitted to be amplified, but not altered.[2]

The result of this method is illustrated very characteristically in Dryden's rendering of the invective of Agamemnon against Calchas, in the first book of the *Iliad*. What Homer says, literally translated, is this:—

> Prophet of ills, never as yet dost thou say aught good to me; ever indeed thou lovest to prophesy evil; and never yet hast thou said or accomplished any favourable thing. And now, prophesying among the Danai, thou declarest that the far-darting God works them woe on this account, because I would not receive splendid ransom for the damsel Chryseis, since I greatly desire to have her at home, for indeed I prefer her to Clytemnestra, my lawful wife, since she is not inferior to her either in form, or stature, or mind, or in the works of her hands. But even so I

[1] Chapter vi. pp 173-174.

[2] See vol. iii. p. 527.

will give her back, if this be better: I wish that the people be safe and sound, rather than it should be destroyed. But make ready for me at once a gift of honour, in order that I alone of the Argives may not be unrewarded, since so it were unseemly: for ye see this, all of you, that my gift is going elsewhere.[1]

This passage is turned by Dryden as follows:—

Augur of ill, whose tongue was never found
Without a priestly curse or boding sound;
For not one blest event foretold to me
Passed through that mouth, or passed unwillingly.
And now thou dost with lies the throne invade,
By practice hardened in thy slandering trade.
Obtending heaven, for whate'er ills befall,
And sputtering under specious names thy gall.
Now Phœbus is provoked, his rites and laws
Are in his priest profaned, and I the cause:
Since I detained a slave my sovereign prize,
And sacred gold, your idol-god, despise.
I love her well: and well her merits claim
To stand preferred before my Grecian dame.
Not Clytemnestra's self in beauty's bloom
More charmed, or better plied the various loom.
Mine is the maid: and brought, in happy hour,
With every household grace adorned to bless my nuptial bower.
Yet shall she be restored; since public good
For private interest ought not be withstood
To save the effusion of my people's blood.
But right requires, if I resign my own,
I should not suffer for your sakes alone;
Alone excluded from the prize I gained,
And by your common suffrage have obtained.
The slave without a ransom shall be sent:
It rests with you to make the equivalent.

This is rendered with Dryden's usual command of bold and flexible idiom. He carries out his principle of following the sense of the original, rather than the exact words: he "amplifies" without reserve, taking twenty-seven lines to express what Homer says in fifteen. But it must be added that he alters (contrary to his precept), if not the sense, at least the spirit of the original. There is more of Dryden than of Homer in Agamemnon's abuse of the

[1] Translated from *Iliad*, i. 106-120.

priest; and, on the other hand, Homer would never have represented the king so forgetful of his dignity as to use the coarse terms, worthy of Thersites, which Dryden puts into his mouth. Dryden makes no attempt to follow Homer in the simple details of Chryseis' charms; and his carelessness appears alike in the ambiguous grammar of the line:

I should not suffer for your sakes alone,

and in the introduction of a line of fourteen syllables into the heroic metre. Pope's version is more satisfactory:—

Augur accursed! denouncing mischief still,
Prophet of plagues, for ever boding ill!
Still must that tongue some wounding message bring,
And still thy priestly pride provoke thy king?
For this are Phœbus' oracles explored,
To teach the Greeks to murmur at their lord?
For this with falsehood is my honour stained,
Is heaven offended, and a priest profaned,
Because my prize, my beauteous maid, I hold,
And heavenly charms prefer to proffered gold?
A maid unmatched in manners as in face,
Skilled in each art, and crowned with every grace,
Not half so dear were Clytemnestra's charms,
When first her blooming beauties blest my arms.
Yet, if the gods demand her, let her sail;
Our cares are only for the public weal
Let me be deemed the hateful cause of all,
And suffer, rather than my people fall.
The prize, the beauteous prize, I will resign,
So dearly valued, and so justly mine.
But since for common good I yield the fair,
My private loss let grateful Greece repair,
Nor unrewarded let your prince complain,
That he alone has fought and bled in vain

There is here nothing of the scolding style which, in Dryden's version, debases the dignity of the speech The rendering is paraphrastic, like Dryden's, but it is shorter and closer to the original: the rhythm and the rhetoric are both excellent. As against these merits, the diction is far from Homer's simplicity, and is coloured with the gallant phraseology of the Caroline court. Where the Greek says simply: "I prefer her (Chryseis) to Clytemnestra,

my lawful wife, for she is not inferior to her, etc.," Pope says, after the exaggerated manner of Statius, parts of whose *Thebais* he had translated before coming to Homer :—

> *Not half so dear* were Clytemnestra's charms,
> *When first her blooming beauties blest my arms.*

And, characteristically, he assigns a more refined reason to Agamemnon's demands for compensation than Homer had thought of :—

> But since *for common good* I yield the fair,
> My private loss let *grateful Greece* repair.

In spite of these faults, which are typical of the work as a whole, the translation of the *Iliad* by Pope is the greatest performance of the kind in our own or any other language, and the completion of it fully deserved the national triumph, picturesquely commemorated by Gay in his *Welcome to Mr. Pope on his Return from Greece.* So widely was it read that its diction and versification came to exercise throughout the eighteenth century an unprecedented influence on the course of metrical composition, and had Cowper confined his criticism of Pope's poetical style to his work as a translator, he would have been fully justified in maintaining that "every warbler has the tune by heart." It was indeed impossible that, in rendering many thousands of Greek lines of narrative into English, all evidence of "mechanic art" should be concealed by the poet. The mannerism of the translation is conspicuous. Full as the *Iliad* is of varied incident, character, and pathos, yet, as a narrative poem, it necessarily contains many level tracts, in which the translator's business is restricted to giving a correct version of this original in his own style. Such passages, of course, are the most easy of imitation: hence what is often erroneously called "*the* Pope style" was caught up and constantly repeated by hundreds of versifiers.

The first example of this all-pervading metrical influence is furnished by Pope's own translation of the *Odyssey.* Here the commercial and mechanical element

in the undertaking was unfortunately manifest. The *Odyssey* itself was greatly inferior to the *Iliad* in heroic dignity and pathos: its interest lay in its adventures; and a translator could gain an adequate amount of credit by telling the story in flowing verse. Naturally, therefore, the manner of narrating adopted by Pope in the *Iliad* became the most characteristic feature in the work; and this was so successfully imitated by the two assistants whom he had chosen that it is practically impossible to discriminate between the versions of the scholars and that of the master.

Elijah Fenton, the elder of the two, was born at Shelton, near Newcastle-under-Lyme, on the 20th of May 1683. He was educated at Jesus College, Cambridge, and took his B.A. degree in 1704. As a steady Nonjuror he seems to have earned the esteem of Pope, who used his influence to procure for him the appointment of tutor in the family of Lady Trumbull. In his tragedy of *Mariamne* (1723), Fenton showed some dramatic ability; and he was a friend and admirer of the playwright Southerne.[1] He died in August 1730.

William Broome, Pope's other assistant, was the son of a farmer in Cheshire, and was born in 1689. He was educated at Eton, where he was captain of the school, and afterwards (as there was no vacancy at King's College in his year) at St. John's College, Cambridge, where he became a sizar on the 10th of July 1708, taking his B.A. degree from it in January 1711-12, and his M.A. in 1716. He had a great facility of imitating other men's styles, an accomplishment which probably recommended him to Pope as a translator, though the latter afterwards satirised him on this account in the *Bathos*: he was also scholar enough to furnish the necessary notes. He died in 1745.

I have told the curious story of this translating partnership in my *Life* of Pope:[2] the whole transaction savours disagreeably of the tricks of trade. Pope had the

[1] See his verses to him on p. 427.

[2] Elwin and Courthope's edition of *Pope's Works*, vol. v chapter IX.

lion's share of the profits—as was fair enough; nor do I think that there is any ground for the charge brought against him by the Dunces of treating his partners shabbily; his fault rather lies in the deception he practised on the public, by making it appear that he was practically responsible for the entire translation. He had no wish to gain credit for what did not belong to him (for evidently the work could add nothing to his reputation), but he was anxious that the translation should not suffer in the market, by being supposed largely the production of less famous hands than his. Fenton, a lazy and good-natured man, fell in readily with this view of the matter, as far as he thought he honourably could; but Broome, vain and talkative, and caring more for fame than money, fancied that he was being unjustly deprived of the reputation due to him. Afraid to oppose Pope's manœuvres openly, he talked about them behind his back, and thus furnished materials for the reports that were widely spread by the poet's enemies of his dirty conduct to his partners.

Another translator, who carried what has been called *the* Pope style to excess, was Christopher Pitt. Born in 1699, he was sent in 1714 to Winchester, where he had translated the whole of the *Pharsalia* before he entered New College, Oxford, in 1719.[1] He took his M.A. degree in 1724, and became Fellow of his College, but resigned the position on being appointed rector of Pimpern, in Dorsetshire. In 1725 he published his translation of Vida's *Art of Poetry*: his translation of the *Æneid* appeared in 1729. He died in 1748.

Of Pitt's translation of the *Æneid*, Johnson says with his customary under-note of sarcasm:—

> Pitt, engaging as a rival with Dryden, naturally observed his failures, and avoided them; and as he wrote after Pope's *Iliad*, he had an example of an exact, equable, and splendid versification. With these advantages, seconded by great diligence, he might successfully labour particular passages, and escape many

[1] He was not aware at the time that it had been translated by Rowe: his own version was never published.

errors. If the two versions are compared, perhaps the result would be, that Dryden leads the reader forward by his general vigo[illegible] him to contemplate the [illegible] Dryden's faults are forgc[illegible]t Pitt's beauties are neglected in the languor of a cold and listless perusal—that Pitt pleases the critics, and Dryden the people—that Pitt is quoted and Dryden read.

This is very happy: that it is also just may be seen by the following two versions of the death of Priam in the second *Æneid*, a passage that had already been rendered by Gavin Douglas, the Earl of Surrey, and Phaer, whose translations may also be found in the second volume of this History:[1]—

DRYDEN

Perhaps you may of Priam's fate inquire;
He, when he saw his regal town on fire,
His ruined palace, and his entering foes,
On every side inevitable woes;
In arms disused invests his limbs, decayed
Like them with age, a late and useless aid.
His feeble shoulders scarce the weight sustain;
Loaded not armed, he creeps along with pain,
Despairing of success, ambitious to be slain
Uncovered but by heaven, there stood in view
An altar; near the hearth a laurel grew,
Doddered with age, whose boughs encompass round
The household gods, and shade the holy ground.
Here Hecuba, with all her helpless train
Of dames, for shelter sought, but sought in vain.
Driven like a flock of doves along the sky,
Their images they hug, and to the altar fly.
The queen, when she beheld her trembling lord,
And hanging by his side a heavy sword,
"What rage," she cried, "has seized my husband's mind?
What arms are these? and to what use designed?
These times want other aids: were Hector here,
Ev'n Hector now in vain like Priam would appear.
With us one common shelter shalt thou find
Or in one common fate with us be joined."
She said, and with a last salute embraced
The poor old man, and by the laurel placed.

[1] Vol. ii. pp. 134-136.

PITT

And now, great queen, you haply long to know
The fate of Priam in this general woe.
When with sad eyes the venerable sire
Beheld his Ilion sunk in hostile fire;
His palace stormed, the lofty gates laid low,
His rich pavilions crowded with the foe:
In arms long since disused the hoary sage
Loads each stiff languid limb that shook with age;
Girds on an unperforming sword in vain,
And runs on death amid the hostile train.
Within the courts, beneath the naked sky
An altar rose: an aged laurel by:
That o'er the hearth and household gods displayed
A solemn gloom, a deep majestic shade:
Hither like doves that close embodied fly
From some dark tempest blackening in the sky,
The queen for refuge with her daughters ran,
Clung, and embraced their images in vain.
But when in cumbrous arms the king she spied,
"Alas! my poor unhappy lord!" she cried,
"What more than madness, midst these dire alarms,
Moved thee to load thy helpless age with arms?
No aid like these this dreadful hour demands,
But asks far other strength, far other hands.
No! could my own dear Hector arm again,
My own dear Hector now would arm in vain.
Come to these altars, here we all shall have
One common refuge or one common grave."
This said, her aged lord the queen embraced,
And on the sacred seat the monarch placed.

If these versions be compared with those of Surrey and Phaer, it will be found that the older translators adhere strictly to Ben Jonson's principle of literal exactness, while Dryden and Pitt adopt the method of paraphrase. Both the latter expand freely the sense of their original, but Dryden has much more of Virgil's simplicity. Virgil compresses his narrative into twenty lines: Dryden takes twenty-seven to express Virgil's meaning, and the ampler space is occupied with ideas added to those of his author. Thus Virgil writes simply of Priam, "densos fertur moriturus in hostes." Dryden expands this with ideas suggested by Virgil's general description of the old king:—

Loaded not armed, he creeps along with pain,
Despairing of success, ambitious to be slain.

In the same way he translates Virgil's "veterrima laurus":

a laurel grew
Doddered with age;

meaning that the laurel was so old that it was overrun with creepers. Pitt's rendering, on the contrary, which actually runs to thirty lines, is swelled by the mere addition of words. Wishing to give his verse a stately effect, he speaks of the "sad eyes" of the "venerable sire"; of his "rich pavilions"; of "the hoary sage"; of the laurel that

displayed
A solemn gloom, a deep majestic shade·

although no equivalent for these phrases is to be found in the Latin text; and he thinks it a good stroke to render Virgil's simple "non si ipse meus nunc afforet Hector," by

No, could my own dear Hector arm again,
My own dear Hector now would arm in vain.

Pitt's English version of Vida's *Ars Poetica* is a much more valuable work. Vida was a contemporary of Ariosto, and one of the most enthusiastic pioneers of the Classical Renaissance. His Latin poems well deserve translation on account of the beauty and grace of their style; but they are also interesting, as showing how blinded the Italians of the time were to everything in the Revival of Learning beyond the excellence of Greek and Roman civilisation. He can see nothing in the overthrow of the Roman Empire by the barbarians but the destruction of ancient art; nothing of any worth in the life of the mediæval Italian cities before the days of the Medici. Pitt's rendering of his ideas is excellent:—

Hence a vast change of their old manners sprung;
The slaves were forced to speak their master's tongue;
No honours now were paid the sacred Muse,
But all were bent on mercenary views;

Till Latium saw with joy th' Aonian train
By the great Medici restored again;
Th' illustrious Medici, of Tuscan race,
Were born to cherish learning in disgrace,
New life on every science to bestow,
And lull the cries of Europe in her woe.
With pity they beheld these turns of fate,
And propped the ruins of the Grecian state;
For lest her wit should perish with her fame,
Their cares supported still the Argive name.
They called th' aspiring youths from distant parts
To plant Ausonia with the Grecian arts;
To bask in ease, and science to diffuse,
And to restore the Empire of the Muse;
They sent to ravaged provinces with care,
And cities wasted by the rage of war;
To buy the ancients' works, of deathless fame,
And snatch th' immortal labours from the flame;
To which the foes had doomed each glorious piece,
Who reign and lord it in the realms of Greece.

Hence, while Vida himself invokes the gods of ancient Greece, he seems seriously to believe that Leo X. was animated with the zeal of Peter the Hermit, and (inverting Virgil's *Excudent alii*) he writes thus of the contemplated Crusade:—

Ye Gods of Rome, ye guardian deities,
Who lift our nation's glory to the skies;
And thou, Apollo, the great source of Troy,
Let Rome at least this single palm enjoy,
To shine in arts supreme, as once in power,
And teach the nations she subdued before;
Since discord all Ausonia's kings alarms,
And clouds the ancient glories of her arms.
In our own breasts we sheathe the civil sword,
Our country naked to a foreign lord;
Which, lately prostrate, started from despair,
Burned with new hopes, and armed her hands for war;
But armed in vain; th' inexorable hate
Of envious Fortune called her to her fate.
Insatiate in her rage, her frowns oppose
The Latin fame, and woes are heaped on woes.
Our dread alarms each foreign monarch took;
Through all their tribes the distant nations shook;
To Earth's last bounds the fame of Leo runs;
Nile heard, and Indus trembled for his sons;

Arabia heard the Medicean line,
The first of men, and sprung from race divine.
The Sovereign priest and mitred king appears
With his loved Julius joined, who kindly shares
The reins of Empire and the public cares.
To break their country's chains, the generous pair
Concert their schemes, and meditate the war;
On Leo Europe's monarchs turn their eyes;
On him alone the Western world relies;
And each bold chief attends his dread alarms,
While the proud Crescent fades before his arms.

I have already said that nothing could be further removed from the spirit of Pindar—the representative lyric poet of Greek city life in the days of its highest freedom—than the spirit of any Italian poet in the age of Humanism; and this truth is exemplified in the tame Pindaric imitations of Chiabrera. In England, on the contrary, poets of different orders and different generations have found something congenial in Pindar's thought, which they have attempted to reproduce in various manners Cowley, attracted by his discursive method, and (as he thought) the irregular freedom of his metre, imitated him in his own metaphysical vein, and was himself copied by many English disciples. Congreve was the first to point out that Pindar's *Odes* were formed upon a regular system; and when the scholarly genius of the Renaissance had pervaded the whole fabric of English education, Collins, who perhaps inherited by nature more of the fire of Pindar than any English poet, showed, in the structure of his own odes, that he was acquainted with the laws of Greek lyric verse. Three years after the appearance of Collins's little volume, Pindar was himself translated for the first time into English, on Dryden's paraphrastic principles, but with due observance of the order of his verse; and the work was hailed with an enthusiastic ode by Joseph Warton, who recognised in it an example of the lyrical spirit which he desired to see introduced into English poetry.

Gilbert West, the author of the translation, was born in 1703. He was the son of Richard West, prebendary

of Winchester, who had himself produced an edition of Pindar in 1697. Gilbert was educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford, where he took his B.A. degree in 1725. He afterwards served for a few years in the army, but retired from it in 1729 on his marriage with Catherine Bartlett, with whom he lived in country quiet at his house in West Wickham, Kent. He was a friend of Pope, who seems to have had a special regard for him, as he left him a reversionary legacy of £200 and £5 to buy a memorial ring. Among his other friends were the first William Pitt and George Lyttelton. Both visited, and Lyttelton praised, him in his country retirement;[1] and both appear to have been influenced in their religious opinions by West, who was a man of firm convictions, and the author of a book called *Observations on the Resurrection*, published in 1747. He died in 1756.

West's *Translation* appeared in 1749. Whether it was suggested by Collins's *Odes* which were published in 1746, or by the elder West's edition of Pindar, is not known; but it undoubtedly helped to confirm the strong Pindaric tendency in the public taste, and may indirectly have had some influence on Gray's *Progress of Poesy*, which was not given to the world till 1757. The version, which is made on Dryden's paraphrastic principle, is both accurate and spirited, as may be judged from the following rendering of the famous lines describing the Islands of the Blessed:—

STROPHE IV

But in the happy fields of light
Where Phœbus with an equal ray
Illuminates the balmy night
    And gilds the cloudless day,
In peaceful unmolested joy
The good their smiling hours employ.
Them no uneasy wants constrain
    To vex th' ungrateful soil,
To tempt the dangers of the billowy main
And break their strength with unabating toil,
A frail disastrous being to maintain:

[1] For Lyttelton's reference to this see p. 378.

But in their joyous calm abodes
The recompense of justice they receive,
And in the fellowship of gods
Without a tear eternal ages live;
While, banished by the Fates from joy and rest,
Intolerable woes the impious soul molest.

ANTISTROPHE IV

But they who, in true virtue strong,
The third purgation can endure,[1]
And keep their minds from fraudful wrong
And guilt's contagion pure,
They through the starry paths of Jove
To Saturn's blissful seat remove;
Where fragrant breezes, vernal airs,
Sweet children of the main,
Purge the blest island from corroding cares,
And fan the bosom of each verdant plain;
Where fertile soil immortal fruitage bears,
Trees, from whose flaming branches flow,
Arrayed in golden bloom, refulgent beams;
And flowers, of golden hue, that blow
On the fresh borders of their parent streams:
These, by the blest in solemn triumph worn,
Their unpolluted hands and clustering locks adorn.

EPODE IV

Such is the righteous will, the high behest,
Of Rhadamanthus, ruler of the blest,
The just assessor of the throne divine,
On which, high raised above all gods, recline,
Linked in the golden bands of wedded love,
The great progenitors of thundering Jove
There, in the number of the blessed enrolled,
Live Cadmus, Peleus, heroes famed of old,
And young Achilles, to those isles removed,
Soon as, by Thetis won, relenting Jove approved.

[1] Literally: "Those who have had the courage to remain steadfast thrice in each life."

through irregular channels. And, in the same way, the reaction in poetry against all forms of mediævalism confined the imagination too strictly within ethical and satirical limits, to the exclusion of those lyrical impulses which had once found natural and simple modes of expression.

The time has now come for tracing the gradual uprising of these suppressed forces against the dominant Compromise. Through the reigns of George II. and George III., three distinct imaginative movements may be observed to agitate the surface of the prevailing Whiggism; and at the same time the poets who are affected by them are seen to be seeking, as their vehicles of expression, blank verse or other kinds of English metre, in preference to the heroic couplet, which has hitherto maintained an undisputed supremacy. The tendencies in question are the Deistical Movement, the Methodist Movement, and the Antiquarian and Æsthetic Movement, in which the Romantic Revolution of the last part of the century had its first beginnings. As all of these in various ways affected profoundly the course of English poetry, I shall consider them here in the order I have named.

The Deists are first spoken of as a distinct body of religious thinkers about the middle of the sixteenth century. Professing to believe in a personal God, they excluded from their worship the person of Christ, and while insisting on the obligations of Natural Religion, rejected the authority of Revelation. Their doctrines were the intelligible (though not logical) sequel of the Reforming movement in religion. As the Church of Geneva had shaken off the traditions of Rome, as the Anabaptists had freed themselves from the restraints imposed by Calvin, so the Deists imagined themselves to have advanced a further step along the path of liberty by repudiating the authority of Scripture. They themselves were divided from each other by shades and sections of belief. The earliest of English Deists, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, a man evidently of a sincerely pious temper, reduced universal religion to five articles of belief: (1) That there is one supreme God; (2) That He is chiefly to be worshipped; (3) That piety and virtue is

the principal part of His worship; (4) That we must repent of our sins, and, if we do so, God will pardon them; (5) That there are rewards for good men, and punishments for bad men in a future state.[1] There was nothing in these articles directly opposed to Christian tenets, nor did Lord Herbert show any antagonism to Christianity, except in considering it a "particular," as contrasted with the "universal" religion. But those who followed him showed themselves less anxious to propagate the religion of Nature than to subvert the authority of Revelation. They were by no means agreed in accepting Lord Herbert's fifth article; on the other hand, they were united in a common attempt to undermine on different sides the [illegible] of the Christian Faith. Some of [illegible] of the first principles [illegible] religion was only to be accepted as the work of the Civil Power. Some, sheltering themselves under the name, while seeking to abolish the thing, tried to prove either, with Collins, that the foundations of Christianity were solely allegorical; with Toland, that "Christianity is not mysterious"; or, with Tindal, that "Christianity is as old as Creation." Others, particularly Morgan and Chubb, spoke highly of the moral doctrines of Christianity, but sought to show, in company with Woolston, a scandalous buffoon, that the miracles, which were supposed to attest the divine origin of the Christian Revelation, were unworthy of credit. The most virulently aggressive of all the Deists in his attacks on Christianity was Lord Bolingbroke, whose main position has been justly summed up in the following proposition, "That from the clearness and sufficiency of the law of nature, it may be concluded that God hath made no other revelation of His will to mankind; and that there is no need for any extraordinary supernatural revelation."[2]

The first didactic poem in English which immediately derives its inspiration from the Deistic movement is Pope's

[1] Leland's *View of the Deistical Writers that have appeared in England in the Last and Present Century* (Fourth Edition, 1764), p. 4.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 383

Essay on Man. This was begun some time in 1731, and the first Epistle was published in February 1733 without the author's name, the poet being very doubtful what kind of reception his work would meet with, and being obviously afraid of attacks by the "Gentlemen of the Dunciad." When he found that the *Essay* was favourably received and its orthodoxy unquestioned, he took courage, and, after the second and third Epistles had appeared still anonymously, owned the fourth, which was published in January 1734.

Warburton pretended that Bolingbroke's philosophy —which did not appear in a published form till after his death—was derived from the *Essay on Man.*[1] The reverse is the case. Pope himself told Spence "how much, or rather how wholly, he was obliged to Lord Bolingbroke for the thoughts and reasonings in his moral work; and once in particular said that, beside their frequent talking over that subject together, he had received, I think, seven or eight sheets from Lord Bolingbroke in relation to it (as I apprehended by way of letters), both to direct the plan in general, and to supply the matter for the particular epistles."[2] This account is confirmed by Lord Bathurst.[3] Bolingbroke, while an exile in France, had occupied his enforced leisure with the study of ancient and modern philosophy, and had formed from it a system of reasoning which he fondly imagined to be original. On his return to England in 1724, he was in the habit of discoursing on natural religion to a limited circle of acquaintances, including Pope, Lyttelton, the two Richardsons, and a few others, who used to meet for discussion at the house of Mallet.[4] He himself had imbibed an intense hatred of the Christian religion, and though he professed to be mainly arguing on behalf of Deism as against Atheism, he was obviously mainly concerned to overthrow the reasoning of the Anglican Clergy. He accordingly exerted all his powers to prove the futility, or at the least the superfluity,

[1] Cited in *Pope's Works* (Elwin and Courthope), vol. ii. p. 276.
[2] Spence, *Anecdotes*, p. 108. [3] *Pope's Works*, vol. ii. p. 269.
[4] *Ibid.* p. 275.

There must be, somewhere, such a rank as man:
And all the question (wrangle e'er so long)
Is only this, if God has placed him wrong.

Pope hopes to convince the atheist; yet, without any preliminary consideration as to the existence of a Creator, he starts with a complete *petitio principii*, and assumes a creative intelligence of infinite wisdom and power, as well as a graduated scale of reasoning creatures, in which man must occupy his necessary place. Having thus claimed a position which his antagonists would certainly not have granted him, he proceeds to state a problem for discussion which, under the conditions, is superfluous; for if infinite wisdom must have formed the best of possible systems, it is evident that, in that system, man cannot be placed wrong.

The inconsistencies in Pope's scheme, arising out of his attempt to combine his own view of natural religion with Bolingbroke's, are numberless. One example will suffice. Bolingbroke denied the necessity of believing in a future state, as an essential article in the Deist creed. The only attributes he allowed to the Creator were infinite wisdom and power; and when forced by his opponents to explain the existence of evil in the world, on his own principles, as compatible with the idea of a just and beneficent Deity, he evaded the difficulty by maintaining that man could form no conception of the meaning of justice and goodness in their application to God. Pope, whose idea of Deism resembled Lord Herbert's, and who believed both in a future state and in the goodness of God, failed to see that it was not open to him to argue as Bolingbroke did about the existence of moral evil. His main position depended on Bolingbroke's axiom, that man, with *his limited intelligence, could not understand the universal design of God's infinite wisdom*, and, not being able to pursue this line of reasoning on his own ground to all its consequences, he committed himself unsuspiciously to an argument like the following:—

If plagues or earthquakes break not heaven's design,
Why then a Borgia or a Catiline?

alarm that his attempt to graft his own beliefs on the system of his "guide, philosopher, and friend," had produced a result which involved his reasoning in anomaly and his character in suspicion. It was then that his rescue was undertaken by Warburton, hitherto one of his enemies, who, with matchless effrontery and sophistry, set himself to demonstrate that the poem, which he had once condemned for its "rank atheism," was a work of unblemished orthodoxy.

Considered in its philosophical aspect, the *Essay on Man* is open to the harshest censures it has encountered. Neither Bolingbroke nor Pope had the mind of a philosopher. Bolingbroke was both by temper and training an orator: his opinions were adopted under the influence of passion, and the art which he displayed in the expression of them was always regulated by the desire for applause. As he aimed merely at the effect of the moment, he never hesitated, when it suited his purpose, to avail himself of arguments which he denounced on principle; nothing is therefore easier than to reduce his boasted system to a heap of contradictions. Pope added to the passion of his rhetorical teacher the discursive imagination of a poet. He flitted from one idea to its opposite with naïve security, using the forms of logic, and giving to each proposition, as it occurred to his mind, an admirably condensed and apparently cogent form of expression. The "philosophy" of both master and pupil consists of a series of "sorites," which crumble into incoherence the moment they are subjected to serious examination.

The emphatically logical form into which the *Essay* is cast brings into relief Pope's incapacity to think continuously. A striking example of this may be found at the very opening of the argument in the first Epistle, which runs as follows:—

> Of systems possible if 'tis confessed
> That wisdom infinite must form the best,
> Where all must full or not coherent be,
> And all that rises rise in due degree,
> Then, in the scale of reasoning life, 'tis plain

There must be, somewhere, such a rank as man:
And all the question (wrangle e'er so long)
Is only this, if God has placed him wrong.

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If plagues or earthquakes break not heaven's design,
Why then a Borgia or a Catiline?

> Who knows but He, whose hand the lightning forms,
> Who heaves old ocean, and who wings the storms;
> Pours fierce ambition in a Cæsar's mind,
> Or turns young Ammon loose to scourge mankind?

When Crousaz pointed out the inevitable conclusion from such reasoning, Pope was horrified.

Self-contradictions abound throughout the *Essay*. Fixing his attention on the point he is seeking to labour for the moment, the poet forgets that he has previously said something entirely opposite. To cite a few instances, in the first Epistle he attempts to account for the existence of moral evil by describing great crimes as exceptional impulses intended to create onward movements in society:—

> The *general* order, since the whole began,
> Is kept in nature, and is kept in man.

But in the third Epistle, where it suits him, for poetical purposes, to describe a Golden Age, he supposes that the first change in society was brought about by man's degeneracy:—

> Nor think in nature's state they blindly trod;
> The state of nature was the state of God.
> Self-love and social at her birth began,
> Union the bond of all things, and of man.
> Pride then was not; nor arts, that pride to aid;
> Man walked with beast, joint tenant of the shade;
> The same his table, and the same his bed;
> No murder clothed him, and no murder fed.

In the third Epistle he compares man favourably with beasts, because

> He only knows,
> And helps, another creature's wants and woes.
> . . . . .
> Man cares for all: to birds he gives his woods,
> To beasts his pastures, and to fish his floods.

Yet he has scarcely proceeded in his argument above a hundred lines, when he declares that man is

> Of half that live the butcher and the tomb.

In the fourth Epistle his object is to prove that

> *Virtue alone is happiness below;*

and he says that the virtuous man

> Learns from the union of the rising whole
> The first, last purpose of the human soul;
> And knows where faith, law, morals, all began,
> All end, in love of God and love of Man:

while, on the contrary, when looking for an explanation of the expansion of society, he ascribes everything to the operation of self-love and the ruling passion, and seems to adapt the hypothesis of Mandeville, that the diversity of passions in men is the result of difference in *organisation*:—

> Hence different passions more or less inflame,
> As strong or weak the organs of the frame;
> And hence one master passion in the breast,
> Like Aaron's serpent, swallows up the rest.

But if the *Essay* be regarded, as indeed by the critic it ought to be regarded, primarily in its poetical aspect, it must undoubtedly be ranked among the classical didactic poems of the world The aim of the poet, as of the orator, is to persuade, not to convince; and Bolingbroke indicated with lucidity to Pope the nature of the task before him:—

> Should the poet (he says in one of his letters to him) make syllogisms in verse, or pursue a long process of reasoning in the didactic style, he would be sure to tire his reader on the whole like Lucretius, though he reasoned better than the Roman, and put into some parts of his work the same poetical fire. He must contract, he may shadow, he has a right to omit whatever will not be cast in the poetic mould, and when he cannot instruct he may hope to please. In short, it seems to me that the business of the philosopher is to dilate, to press, to prove, to convince, and that of the poet to hint, to touch his subject with short and spirited strokes, to warm the affections, and to speak to the heart.[1]

1 *Bolingbroke's Works* (1841), vol iii. p. 44.

Pope was no doubt at the outset inclined to think of himself mainly as a philosopher, and had formed in his mind a gigantic framework for an "ethic work on the Nature of Man."[1] But he soon perceived the wisdom of Bolingbroke's advice, and with excellent judgment contracted his scheme in such a way as to suit the taste of the large and mixed audience that he hoped to attract. The *Essay on Man* is divided into four Epistles; (1) Of the Nature and State of Man with respect to the Universe; (2) Of the Nature and State of Man with respect to himself as an Individual; (3) Of the Nature and State of Man with respect to Society; (4) Of the Nature and State of Man with respect to Happiness. Under each head instinct prompted the poet to seize on the points which would be most likely to strike the imagination, when put forward in an argumentative form, and each point being fortified by at least the appearance of reason, and illustrated by a blaze of wit and imagery, the mind of the reader, like that of an audience listening to a great orator, is carried forward from one stage to another, without being allowed time for analytical reflection. Though, on the philosophic side, a person mainly occupied with the pursuit of truth can never be satisfied with the reasoning of the *Essay*, he is forced by it to think, and the æsthetic pleasure it produces, through the skilful arrangement of thoughts and images round a central theme, must always be felt by every genuine lover of the art of poetry.

With regard to the form of the poem Pope justifies it in the prefatory notice to the *Essay*[2]:—

> As the epistolary way of writing hath prevailed much of late, we have ventured to publish this piece, composed some time since, and whose author chose this manner, notwithstanding his subject was high and of dignity, because of its being mixed with argument which of its nature approacheth to prose.

He thus inevitably challenged comparison with the work of Dryden, who had declared in his *Religio Laici*:—

[1] Spence, *Anecdotes*, pp. 238, 36, 103.

[2] This appeared before the First Epistle, when separately published in 1733.

And this unpolished rugged form I chose,
As fittest for discourse, and nearest prose.

In native vigour of thought, as well as in lucidity and purity of expression, Dryden, of the two poets, is greatly the superior. He was a practised dialectician, and the mastery of the familiar style, shown in his treatment of the couplet, both in his *Religio Laici* and his *Hind and Panther*, is admirable. On the other hand, it is to be remembered that his aim in each of these poems was far less elevated than that of Pope in the *Essay on Man.* Dryden's argument was concentrated on a single issue, which afforded little opening for illustration or imagery. The poet, in an easy conversational vein, contracted or expanded, as he chose, the few points which it was his object to labour. But in the *Essay on Man* the thought is so pregnant, so condensed, that almost every word is of importance, and Pope constantly encounters the difficulty which Horace notices as inherent in the philosophical style of verse: "brevis esse laboro; obscurus fio." The gravest defect in the diction of the *Essay* is incorrectness of grammar, caused by repeated ellipses. The following are examples of a fault, the more vexatious because it often occurs in the midst of passages which otherwise show an almost miraculous skill of expression:

Of man what see we but his station here,
From which to reason or to which refer?

Then say not man's imperfect, heaven in fault;
Say rather man's as perfect as he ought.

And oft so mix the difference is too nice,
Where ends the virtue or begins the vice.

Nothing is foreign; parts relate to whole;
One all-extending, all-preserving soul
Connects each being, greatest with the least,[1]
Made beast in aid of man, and man of beast,

The good or bad the gifts of fortune gain,
But these less taste them as they worse obtain.

[1] Pope having omitted "the" before "greatest," Warburton pretended that he had meant that the greatness of God was most manifest in the least of His creatures.

But grant him riches, your demand is o'er?
"No—shall the good want health, the good want power?"
Add health, and power, and every earthly thing:
"Why bounded power? why private? why no King?"

Pope fell so much into the habit of contenting himself with elliptical forms of expression, that he sometimes adopted an imperfect construction easily capable of improvement, as in the lines:—

In human works, though laboured on with pain,
A thousand movements scarce one purpose gain;
In God's, one single can its end produce;
Yet serves to second to some other use;

where he might have written with perfect correctness "one singly."

The second great blot on the diction of the *Essay* is the frequency of inversion which, if sometimes employed for the purpose of emphasis, seems to be more often the result of the difficulty of reasoning in rhyme. We have lines like

And quitting sense call imitating God.

Pleasures are ever in our hands or eyes,
And when in act they cease, in prospect rise:
Present to grasp, and future still to find,
The whole employ of body and of mind.

Nor virtue male or female can we name,
But what will grow on pride, or grow on shame.

When, however, all deductions are made, much remains. To rest—as Byron did—Pope's chief claim to poetical greatness upon the *Essay on Man* because "the highest of all poetry is ethical poetry, as the highest of all earthly objects must be moral truth,"—is a fatal mistake in criticism. Many persons in the eighteenth century thought, with Marmontel, that "the end of the didactic poem is to instruct";[1] whereas the true end of all poetry is to please. The rank of a poem depends on the kind of pleasure it produces, and no instructed judge would

[1] See *Pope's Works*, vol. ii. p. 335.

maintain, on reflection, that the imaginative pleasure produced by ethical compositions like Horace's *Satires* and *Epistles* can compare in quality with the pleasure arising out of simple narratives of action, such as Homer's *Iliad.* Hence the test of excellence applied by De Quincey is fallacious:—

> If the question (he says) were asked, What ought to have been the best among Pope's poems? most people would answer, the *Essay on Man.*

Why should they answer so? They could not tell *a priori* in what way the subject ought to be organically treated, or what kind of materials the poet should use for his architecture. He might conceive of his theme from the Christian's, the Deist's, or the Atheist's standing-ground: the merit of his performance depended entirely on the effect he was able to create in the imagination. And upon this point De Quincey decides dogmatically:—

> If the question were asked, What is the worst? all people of judgment would say, the *Essay on Man.* While yet in its rudiments, this poem claimed the first place by the promise of its subject; when finished, by the utter failure of its execution, it fell into the last.[1]

This is sufficiently arrogant, for it not only implicitly sets down Voltaire, Dugald Stewart, Bowles, and Joseph Warton—all of them great admirers of the *Essay*—as men of no judgment, but takes no account of the enduring popularity of the poem. As to Pope's execution of his design, I have shown that he acted on the excellent advice of Bolingbroke. His back-bone of thought was Bolingbroke's scheme of Deism, just as Epicurus' philosophy formed the main subject of the *De Rerum Natura.* But from his master's laboured system Pope selected only those leading points which gave him the fullest opportunities for the exposition of the illustrations and epigrams in which he himself excelled. The diamond-like brilliance of the successive passages in

[1] *Pope's Works*, vol ii. p 333.

which he describes the graduated order of Nature, or the evolution of Society; the loftiness of the rhetoric in which he exalts the infinite wisdom of God; and the moral energy with which he employs his satiric genius to expose the fatuity of the pride of man, are not mere "purple patches," but episodes skilfully evolved out of the subject matter of the *Essay*; and prejudice alone makes Hazlitt say that "the description of the poor Indian and the lamb doomed to death, are all the unsophisticated reader ever remembers of that much-talked-of production."[1] Joseph Warton was certainly no partisan of Pope, but in criticising the *Essay on Man* he judged his genius with more fairness:—

The origin of the connections in social life, the account of the state of nature, the rise and effects of superstition and tyranny, and the restoration of true religion and just government, all these ought to be mentioned as passages that deserve high applause, nay, as some of the most exalted pieces of English poetry.[2]

And again:

Pope has practised the great secret of Virgil's art, which was to discover the very single epithet that precisely suited each occasion. If Pope must yield to other poets in point of fertility of fancy, or harmony of numbers, yet in point of propriety, closeness, and elegance of diction he can yield to none.[3]

Let the two following passages which are only samples of the many excellences of the *Essay on Man* be taken as evidence of the justice of Warton's criticism:

Far as creation's ample range extends,
The scale of sensual, mental powers ascends:
Mark how it mounts to man's imperial race
From the green myriads in the peopled grass;
What modes of sight betwixt each wide extreme,
The mole's dim curtain and the lynx's beam:
Of smell the headlong lioness between
And hound sagacious on the tainted green:

[1] *Lectures on the English Poets*, p. 378.
[2] Cited in *Pope's Works* (Elwin and Courthope), vol. ii. p. 408—foot-note 6.
[3] *Ibid.* p. 365—foot-note 1.

Of hearing, from the life that fills the flood,
To that which warbles through the vernal wood!
The spider's touch, how exquisitely fine!
Feels at each thread, and lives along the line:
In the nice bee, what sense so subtly true
From poisonous herbs extracts the healing dew?
How instinct varies in the grov'ling swine,
Compared, half-reasoning elephant, with thine!
'Twixt that and reason what a nice barrier!
For ever separate, yet for ever near!
Remembrance and reflection how allied;
What thin partitions sense from thought divide;
And middle natures, how they long to join,
Yet never pass the insuperable line!
Without this just gradation, could they be
Subjected these to those, or all to thee?
The powers of all subdued by thee alone,
Is not thy reason all these powers in one?[1]

And

Who taught the nations of the field and flood
To shun their poison, or to choose their food?
Prescient, the tides or tempests to withstand,
Build on the wave, or arch beneath the sand?
Who made the spider parallels design,
Sure as Demoivre, without rule or line?
Who bid the stork, Columbus-like, explore
Heavens not his own, and worlds unknown before?
Who calls the council, states the certain day,
Who forms the phalanx, and who points the way?[2]

The social atmosphere which encouraged the Deistic movement was also, indirectly, the inspiring source of one who, as an original thinker, was much superior to Pope; who was not inferior to him in wit and satiric power; but who was far from being his equal in his mastery of the art of poetry. At the close of the first section of his *Night Thoughts*, Edward Young makes a clear reference to the *Essay on Man*:—

Dark [illegible]
O [illegible] in!
O [illegible]
Man too he sung: *immortal* man I sing:
Oft bursts my song beyond the bounds of life;

[1] *Essay on Man*, Epistle i. 207-232. [2] *Ibid.* Epistle iii. 99-108.

> What now but immortality can please?
> O had he pressed his theme, pursued the track,
> Which opens out of darkness into day;
> O had he mounted on his wing of fire,
> Soared where I sink, and sung immortal man;
> How had it blessed mankind and rescued me!

Pope could not have sung "immortal man" without subverting the system of Bolingbroke, which was the basis of his own poem; but Bolingbroke and all his works were an abomination to the author of the above lines. He was the son of Edward Young, Rector of Upham in Hampshire, where he was born in June 1681. Educated on the foundation at Winchester, he entered New College on the 13th of October 1703 as a Commoner, but soon removed to Corpus Christi College, where he remained till 1708, when he was nominated to a law Fellowship at All Souls by Archbishop Tenison. While he was at Oxford, Tindal the Deist, also a Fellow of All Souls, exercised a considerable intellectual influence through the University, but it appears from the testimony of the latter that he could make little impression on the mind of Young, who was then best known among his companions for his witty extemporary epigrams.

Young was more than thirty years old when, in 1712, he published his first poem, *An Epistle to the Right Hon. George, Lord Lansdown*, on the subject of the approaching Peace, aimed at by the Tory Ministry. In 1713 appeared his poem on the Last Day, which he dedicated to the Queen, who was his godmother, and a few months later was issued another religious work by him, *The Force of Religion, or Vanquished Love*, the subject being the execution of Lady Jane Grey. He took the degree of B.C.L. in 1714, and in the following year was appointed tutor to Philip, afterwards Marquis and then Duke of Wharton. The latter, who succeeded to the title of Marquis in 1715, was fond of the poet's society, and in 1716 sent for him to be his companion in Ireland, when he himself returned thither after many escapades on the Continent. Young, being at the

time tutor to the son of the Marquis of Exeter, complied with his first pupil's request and resigned his position, a sacrifice in return for which Wharton in 1719 granted him an annuity. He also used his influence to promote the success of the poet's tragedy, *Busiris*, which, having been begun in 1713, was completed and brought upon the stage in 1719; in that year also Young was granted the degree of D C L. His tragedy called *Revenge* was produced in 1721; and soon afterwards the Duke (for to this rank Wharton had been raised in 1718) gave him a bond for £600, to compensate him for travelling expenses and for his refusal (though he was not yet ordained) of more than one living in the gift of his College.

In 1722 Young spent a considerable time at Eastbury, the seat of Bubb Dodington, who had been his contemporary at New College, and there he met Voltaire. Their meeting seems to have been memorable. Joseph Warton says:—

> Nobody ever said more brilliant things in conversation than Dr Young. The late Lord Melcombe informed me that when he and Voltaire were on a visit to his Lordship at Eastbury, the English poet was far superior to the French in the variety and novelty of his *bon-mots* and repartees.

He continued to be a close companion of the Duke of Wharton till 1725 when the latter, after wasting almost all his substance in riotous living, went abroad. Young now turned his attention seriously to composition. Between 1725 and 1730 he produced several of his lyrical poems (1728)—a style of writing for which he was entirely unqualified—his excellent satires on *The Universal Passion* (1725-7), and his *Epistle to Pope* (1730). The merits of his work, joined to the servile flattery, which he had practised from his first appearance as a writer, at length procured him the pension at which he had been so long aiming. It amounted to £200, and the warrant for it is dated 3rd May 1726. Swift no doubt alludes to it in his *Rhapsody on Poetry* when he says that

> Young must torture his invention
> To flatter knaves or lose his pension.

In 1728 he was ordained, and in 1730 was presented by his college to Welwyn, a rectory worth £300 a year. Beyond this he obtained no preferment, though he must often have applied for it at Court, having perhaps made the mistake, like many other suitors, of overrating the influence of Lady Suffolk with George II. A letter without date, but probably written soon after the King's accession in 1727, as it is addressed to "Mrs. Howard," dwells on the writer's claim to advancement and concludes:—

As for *zeal*, I have written nothing without showing my duty to their Majesties, and some pieces are dedicated to them. This, Madam, is the short and true state of my case. They that make their court to the Ministers, and not to their Majesties, succeed better. If my case deserves some consideration, and you can serve me in it, I humbly hope and believe you will.

Disappointment, thinly veiled, often makes itself visible in *Night Thoughts*, as under the philosophic moralisings of the following passage:—

Indulge me, nor conceive I drop my theme:
Who cheapens life, abates the fear of death.
Twice-told the period spent on stubborn Troy,
Court-favour, yet untaken, I besiege;
Ambition's ill-judged effort to be rich.
Alas! Ambition makes my little less;
Embittering the possessed. Why wish for more?
Wishing of all employments is the worst;
Philosophy's reverse and health's decay:
Were I as plump as stalled Theology,
Wishing would waste me to this shade again.[1]

But he had good cause to think religiously. In 1731 (or according to some authorities 1732) he was married to Lady Elizabeth Lee—daughter of the Earl of Lichfield and widow of Colonel Lee—with whom he lived happily at Welwyn Rectory. His wife had a daughter by her first husband, who, after being married to a son of Lord Palmerston for only fifteen months, was carried off by consumption in 1736, at Lyons, while Young was taking her to Nice. Owing to difficulties made by the authorities,

[1] *Night Thoughts*, Night iv. 64-74.

she had to be buried in unconsecrated ground. Her husband died in 1740, and in 1741 Young lost his own wife. The three are commemorated, under the names of Narcissa, Philander, and Lucia, in *Night Thoughts*, a poem that was written and published between the years 1741 and 1745.

After the publication of *Night Thoughts*, Young's life as a poet contains little that is worth recording. He completed in 1753 a play called *The Brothers*, the proceeds of which, amounting to £400, with an addition of £600 from his own purse, he presented to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. In 1762, being then eighty-one, he was able to compose his poem *Resignation*, of which Johnson, who had made his acquaintance the year before, says: "It was very falsely represented as a proof of decayed faculties. There is Young in every stanza, such as he often was in the highest vigour." Young died at Welwyn on the 5th of April 1765.

A certain prejudice has affected the reputation of this poet on account of the divergence between his principles and his practice as a minister of religion.

Young (says a typical writer in one of the schools of Anglican theology) is one of the most striking examples of the sad disunion of Piety from Truth. If we read his most true, impassioned, and impressive estimate of the world and of religion, we shall think it impossible that he was uninfluenced by his subject. It is, however, a melancholy fact that he was hunting after preferment at eighty years old, and spoke like a disappointed man. The Truth was pictured on his mind in most vivid colours. He felt it while he was writing. He felt himself on a retired spot; and he saw Death, the mighty hunter, pursuing the unthinking world. He saw Redemption—its necessity and its grandeur; and while he looked on it, he spoke as a man would speak whose mind and heart are deeply engaged. *Notwithstanding all this, the view did not reach his heart* Had I preached in his pulpit with the fervour and interest that his *Night Thoughts* discover, he would have been terrified He told a friend of mine, who went to him under religious fears, that he "must go more into the world."[1]

[1] *Remains of the Rev. Richard Cecil, M.A.* (1876), p. 11.

If *Night Thoughts* had been primarily a lyrical poem, or Young a religious writer of the same cast as Cowper, this mode of judgment would have been just. But the case was otherwise. Young was a man of poetic imagination, whose life, as the sketch I have given of it shows, had from an early period been engaged in the active interests and pursuits of society. To condemn him as insincere in his sentiments, because these were inconsistent with his conduct, is to evince an ignorance of the constitution of human nature. *Night Thoughts* ought not to be judged as an emotional so much as a philosophic poem, owing its existence mainly to the intellectual conditions of the times: its inspiring motive is antagonism to the Deistic movement in society, and its form and character are determined by the dramatic and satiric instincts of its author.

The curious mixture of worldliness and religion in Young's temperament is characteristically reflected in his satire entitled *The Universal Passion*, the subject of which is the desire of fame, or at least reputation, by which all members of a gay and licentious society are variously animated. Consisting of seven satires, each inscribed to a different person, it was published in detachments between the years 1725 and 1727. No man of the time was more intimately acquainted than Young with the manners he described. The familiar companion both of men of rank or wealth, like Wharton and Dodington, and of men of letters such as Addison, Swift, and Pope; patronised by such statesmen as Dorset, Wilmington, and Walpole; a favourite with the leading ladies of the Court; the motives and characters of his contemporaries were ever before his eyes. Considering the tone adopted in his early religious poem, *The Last Day*, it might perhaps have been expected that the satirist's standard of judgment would have been lofty and severe. But this was far from being the case:—

Laughing satire (says Young in his Preface to *The Universal Passion*) bids the fairest for success. The world is too proud to

be fond of a serious tutor; and when an author is in a passion, the laugh generally, as in conversation, turns against him. This kind of satire only has any delicacy in it. Of this delicacy Horace is the best master: he appears in good humour while he censures; and therefore his censure has the more weight, as supposed to proceed from judgment, not from passion. Juvenal is ever in a passion: he has little valuable but his eloquence and morality; the last of which I have had in my eye, but rather for emulation than imitation, through my whole work.

The consequence is that the first four of Young's satires, however sensibly they may have touched the time, are not very interesting to posterity. The follies they aim at are trivial and transitory; the persons ridiculed are nameless. Such characters as those of the fop, the curiosity-monger, the place-hunter, the verbal critic, are scarcely worth satiric powder and shot: to call up the manners of the past in their vitality requires an element of passion such as is found in the personal and political bitterness of Pope's satire. On the other hand, in the fifth and sixth satires, "On Women," Young's genius finds the happiest scope for its exercise. Nothing can surpass the versatility, delicacy, and wit with which he discriminates between the different shades of folly in the female characters he has so closely observed. Pope's Atossa is no doubt more famous than any of Young's portraits on account of the celebrity of the individual described; but in the representation of feminine *types* Young not only anticipated Pope, but excelled him. His pictures of Lavinia in church; of the super-delicate Aspasia; of Julia, of whom we are told that

> For her own breakfast she'll project a scheme,
> Nor take her tea without a stratagem;[1]

best of all, perhaps, of Clio, mistress of the art of "damning with faint praise"; are masterpieces of satire:—

> But Clio thus: "What railing without end?
> Mean task! How much more generous to commend!"

[1] *Love of Fame*, Satire vi. 187-188.

Yes, to commend as you are wont to do,
My kind instructor, and example too.
"Daphne," says Clio, "has a charming eye:
What pity 'tis her shoulder is awry!
Aspasia's shape, indeed—But then her air—
The man has parts who finds destruction there.
Almeria's wit has something that's divine;
And wit's enough:—how few in all things shine!
Selina serves her friends, relieves the poor:—
Who was it said, Selina's near threescore?
At Lucia's match I from my soul rejoice;
The world congratulates so wise a choice:
His lordship's rent-roll is exceeding great—
But mortgages will sap the best estate.
In Shirley's form might cherubims appear;
But then—she has a freckle on her ear."
Without a *but* Hortensia she commends,
The first of women, and the best of friends;
Owns her in person, wit, fame, virtue, bright:
But how comes this to pass?—She died last night.[1]

Into this part of his satire, also, Young has thrown most of the weighty moral reflection in which, as he says, he strove to emulate Juvenal; as, for example, in his apostrophe to Aspasia:—

Ah! why so vain, though blooming in thy spring,
Thou shining, frail, adored, and wretched thing?
Old age *will* come: disease *may* come before:
Fifteen is full as mortal as threescore.
Thy fortune and thy charms may soon decay:
But grant these fugitives prolong their stay,
Their basis totters, their foundation shakes;
Life that supports them in a moment breaks.
Then wrought into the soul let virtues shine,
The ground eternal, as the work Divine.

Generally speaking, the light Horatian style of ridicule at which he aimed does not admit of moral eloquence, and indeed the follies he chastises called for the genius rather of an epigrammatist like Martial than of a philosophic satirist like Horace. Young is of the direct lineage of Hall, the character of whose satires I have described in an earlier volume;[2] and, as regards their form, the first

[1] *Love of Fame*, Satire vi. 255-276.

[2] Vol. iii. pp. 65-68.

four satires of *The Universal Passion* are not so much the development of a single moral theme as a series of detached epigrammatic observations. Young shines most in individual lines and couplets, such as:—

> A fool at forty is a fool indeed.[1]

> A quid-nunc is an almanac of State.[2]

> A shameless woman is the worst of men[3]

> Thus vain, not knowing what adorns or blots,
> Men forge the patents that create them sots.[4]

> Health chiefly keeps an atheist in the dark;
> A fever argues better than a Clarke.[5]

Though Pope said that Young "wanted common sense," this is certainly not the characteristic of his satires, which are distinguished by wide knowledge of the world. What can show more common sense than his advice to the affectors of singularity?

> Though wrong the mode, comply; more sense is shown
> In wearing others' follies than your own.

In the first part of *The Universal Passion* his epigrams, while always full of original observation, fly too low; for example:—

> Titles are marks of honest men and wise·
> The fool or knave, that wears a title, lies.[6]

This is very inferior to Pope's

> What can ennoble sots, or slaves, or cowards?
> Alas! not all the blood of all the Howards.[7]

But in the latter part of his Satire, where his observation is turned on the irreligion of society, and especially of women, the point of his epigrams is admirable:—

> Atheists are few. most nymphs a Godhead own,
> And nothing but His attributes disown.

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1 *Love of Fame*, Satire ii. 282.
2 *Ibid.* Satire v. 468.
3 *Ibid.* Satire iv. 26.
4 *Ibid.* Satire iii. 123-124.
5 *Ibid.* Satire iv. 55-56.
6 *Ibid.* Satire i. 147-148.
7 *Essay on Man*, Epistle iv. 215-216.

From atheists far, they steadfastly believe
God is, and is Almighty—to forgive.
His other excellence they'll not dispute;
But mercy, sure, is His chief attribute.
Shall pleasures of a short duration chain
A *lady's* soul in everlasting pain?
Will the great Author us poor worms destroy
For now and then a *sip* of transient joy?
No: He's for ever in a smiling mood;
He's like themselves; or how could He be good?
And they blaspheme, who blacker schemes suppose.
Devoutly thus Jehovah they depose,
The pure, the just! and set up, in His stead,
A Deity that's perfectly *well-bred*.[1]

The light contempt with which the widespread self-complacency of a thoughtless and insensible society is here regarded, was exchanged by Young for a stronger feeling when the system of Deism was expounded, with an appearance of plausibility, in the *Essay on Man*. Not long afterwards his own religious sense was deeply touched by personal sorrow; and to this cause is to be primarily ascribed the form and character of *Night Thoughts*:—

As the occasion of this poem (he says in his Preface) was real not fictitious; so the method pursued in it was rather imposed by what spontaneously arose in the author's mind on that occasion, than meditated or designed; which will appear very probable from the nature of it; for it differs from the common mode of poetry, which is from long narrations to draw short morals. Here, on the contrary, the narrative is short, and the morality arising from it makes the bulk of the poem. The reason of it is that the facts mentioned did naturally pour these moral reflections on the thoughts of the writer.

The "facts" referred to are the deaths of three of those dearest to the poet: the "moral reflections" turn necessarily on the question of the immortality of the soul. They are contained in nine "Nights," of which the first four dwell on the feelings aroused by the loss of Philander, Narcissa, and Lucia; the remaining five deal with the argument suggested by the subject. The whole poem is addressed to a certain Lorenzo who, from touches here

[1] *Love of Fame*, Satire vi. 431-436.

and there in the poem, is supposed by some to have been meant for Young's old pupil and companion, the Duke of Wharton, but who (since the Duke had been dead for some years) should rather be regarded as an impersonation of fashionable infidelity. Young's main purpose in his argument is to show, in opposition to the *Essay on Man*, that Virtue and Happiness are only intelligible on the basis of Immortality.[1] Pope, it is true, was a believer in the immortality of the soul; but not insisting on it in his *Essay* as an essential article of belief, he argues that the ways of God to man are to be vindicated solely by the scheme of visible Creation, in which man is only a part. Had he confined his reasoning to the Stoical contention, that, as man occupies an organic place in the Universe, it is his duty to submit to the will of a perfectly wise Creator, without regard to his individual Happiness, his philosophy, however unsatisfactory, would have been consistent. But since he went on to urge that Man's Happiness was part of God's scheme of Creation; that Happiness was, in fact, "our being's end and aim"; and that Happiness was complete in Virtue; he exposed himself to the full force of the spiritual satire with which Young assailed his theory. With perfect consistency the author of *Night Thoughts* adopted Pascal's line of argument, which Pope had merely used for the satiric purpose of ridiculing human pride. He shows that the greatness of Man was evinced by his discontent with the existing order, and then turning Pope's own reasoning against himself, he exclaims with keen irony:—

> Or own the soul immortal, or invert
> All order. *Go, mock majesty! go, man!*
> And bow to thy superiors of the stall;
> [illegible] superior far.
> [illegible]
> [illegible]
> [illegible]
> [illegible]
> No foreign clime they ransack for their robes;
> Nor brothers cite to the litigious bar.

[1] *Night Thoughts*, Night vii. 139-252.

Their good is good entire, unmixed, unmarred;
They find a paradise in every field,
On boughs forbidden, where no curses hang:
Their ill no more than strikes the sense; unstretched
By previous dread, or murmur in the rear:
When the worst comes, it comes unfeared; one stroke
Begins and ends their woe: they die but once;
Blessed, incommunicable privilege! for which
Proud man, who rules the globe, and reads the stars,
Philosopher or hero, sighs in vain.[1]

There is a certain resemblance, and also a certain contrast between the style of Young and that of the English "metaphysical" poets of the seventeenth century. The resemblance is obvious. The difference is accentuated in *Night Thoughts*. Young never aims, like Donne, at paradoxical conclusions: his reasoning is founded on universal experience and common sense: "wit," as he exercises it, lies in the novelty and ingenuity of the ideas with which established truths are illustrated. His most marked characteristic is the adoption of blank verse, "as fittest for discourse." No one but a man conscious of great powers of thought would have ventured to dispense with the natural advantages afforded by the couplet for controversial purposes, but the closeness and pregnancy of Young's reasoning in blank verse seem to justify the experiment.

His style in this measure is peculiar to himself. It is mainly determined by the dramatic, or rather melodramatic, form into which the argument, addressed to the imaginary Lorenzo, is cast; but this is modified by the poet's love of epigram and antithesis. The periods and clauses are for the most part limited by the close of the line; but Young's exuberant fertility of thought leads to prolific generation of images and words. That mixture of melodrama and epigrammatic metaphor which he affected is well illustrated in the "Night" devoted to reflections on the death of his much-loved Narcissa:—

Live ever here, Lorenzo? Shocking thought!
So shocking, they who wish disown it too;

[1] *Night Thoughts*, Night vii. 290-309.

Disown from shame what they from folly crave.
Live ever in the womb, nor see the light?
For what live ever here?[1]—With labouring step
To tread our former footsteps? pace the round
Eternal, to climb life's worn, heavy wheel,
Which draws up nothing new? to beat and beat
The beaten track? to bid each wretched day
The former mock? to surfeit on the same,
And yawn our joys? or thank a misery
For change though sad? to see what we have seen?
Hear, till unheard, the same old slabbered tale?
To taste the tasted, and at each return
Less tasteful? o'er our palates to decant
Another vintage? strain a flatter year,
Through loaded vessels and a laxer tone;
Crazy machines to grind earth's wasted fruits!
Ill-ground and worse-concocted! load, not life!
The rational foul kennels of excess!
Still streaming thoroughfares of dull debauch;
Trembling each gulp lest Death should snatch the bowl.[2]

It will readily be understood that a style so striking and forcible produces mannerism, and lends itself to parody. Young's theatrical leanings often betray him into bad taste, when he means to be elevated: for example:—

Souls truly great dart forward on the wing
Of just Ambition to the grand result,
The curtain's fall, there see the buskined chief
Unshod behind this momentary scene,
Reduced to his own stature, low or high,
As vice or virtue sinks him or sublimes[3]

Another marked feature in the blank verse of *Night Thoughts* is the linking of periods by the iteration of words. Sometimes, in the elegiac parts, very happy effects are thus produced; as in the pathetic passage alluding to the death of Narcissa, where we may also note the manner in which Young is accustomed to prolong a thought by the elaboration of metaphors:—

Sweet harmonist! and beautiful as sweet!
And young as beautiful! and soft as young!

[1] This and the following lines are plainly suggested by Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*, Book iii 956-962.
[2] *Night Thoughts*, Night iii 325 346
[3] *Ibid.* Night vi 367 372

And gay as soft! and innocent as gay!
And happy (if aught happy here) as good!
For fortune fond had built her nest on high.
Like birds quite exquisite of note and plume,
Transfixed by Fate (who loves a lofty mark)
How from the summit of the grove she fell,
And left it unharmonious! all its charm
Extinguished in the wonders of her song!
Her song still vibrates in my ravished ear,
Still melting there, and with voluptuous pain
(O to forget her!) thrilling through my heart![1]

But by the frequent repetition of this device in such phrases as—

Canst thou, O Night! indulge one labour more?
One labour more indulge![2]

its artificiality becomes too apparent; and, as a whole, the use of blank verse in *Night Thoughts* must be regarded as a *tour de force*, not as a model for imitation. Young overcomes difficulties of expression by strength of thought, rather than by propriety of art. His verse is so near prose that it often passes the boundary line, leaving the reader with a feeling that the wrong instrument of diction has been chosen. Still genius everywhere predominates, and when the art of Young is considered in its evident descent from the school of Milton, and in the influence which it exercised on minds so various as Goldsmith and Cowper, few capable judges will be disposed to deny to *Night Thoughts* (popular as it also was on the Continent) a high and permanent place in the history of English Poetry.[3]

[1] *Night Thoughts*, Night iii. 81-93. [2] *Ibid.* Night ix. 20-21.

[3] Young's references to Milton are frequent, and his direct obligations to him sometimes striking, notably in the lines:—

From that first fire,
Fountain of animation, whence descends
Urania, my celestial guest! who deigns
Nightly to visit me, so mean. (Night v. 208-211.)

Goldsmith has imitated in *The Deserted Village*, 91-94, his lines beginning: "As some tall tower" (Night ii. 683); and in *Edwin and Angelina* he borrows directly from Young (Night iv. 118)—

Man wants but little here below,
Nor wants that little long.

The influence of Young on Cowper, both in his *Satires* and in *The Task*, is obvious everywhere.

If in Young the genius of the satirist is always apparent, the intellectual temper of English society in the reign of George II.—its sense of material security; its consequent tendency to contemplate with self-satisfaction the works of Nature and the state of less favoured nations; its indolence; its benevolence; its enjoyment of art and luxury—is more directly reflected in the poetry of James Thomson. In the absence of motives to strenuous action, poetry tended to become descriptive and reflective; and the attention given to the principles of Natural Religion turned imagination aside from the passions of men to trace the mind of God in the order of external Nature. Thomson spoke for many when he said:—

> I solitary court
> Th' inspiring breeze, and meditate the book
> Of Nature ever open; aiming thence
> Warm from the heart to pour the moral song.

From thoughts like these the transition was easy to such didactic reflections, aroused by foreign travel, on the fate of Empires, as are embodied in *Liberty*; while in *The Castle of Indolence* we find an expression, not only of the poet's own sluggish temperament, but of the peaceful, contemplative, artistic character of his times.

James Thomson was born on 11th September 1700, at Ednam, near Kelso, in Roxburghshire, of which place his father was minister. His mother was Beatrix Trotter, the daughter and co-heiress of a small proprietor of Fogo in Berwickshire, who, by the death of her husband about 1716, was left with straitened means to support a family of nine children. Her brave struggle in these hard circumstances is alluded to by the poet in his *Elegy on the Death of his Mother* (in 1725):—

> No more the orphan train around her stands,
> While her full heart upbraids her needy hands!
> No more the widow's lonely state she feels,
> The shock severe that modest want conceals,
> Th' oppressor's scourge, the scorn of wealthy pride,
> And poverty's unnumbered ills beside.

He was himself at the time of his father's death at the University of Edinburgh, preparing for ordination. Having in the course of his probation to expound a psalm, his diction was so ornate that he is said to have been reproved by the professor of Divinity for using language which could not be understood by the people; it seems, however, that Johnson exaggerates when he says that Thomson hence became disgusted with theology, and determined to devote himself to poetry.[1] He had composed in verse from his early boyhood, and he was encouraged by Lady Grizzel Baillie, a friend of his mother, who advised him to try his fortune in London, and promised him assistance. Thomson came there, accordingly, in 1725, bringing with him the *disjecta membra* of his *Winter* which he showed to his friend Mallet, who advised him to cast them into a single poem. This he did, and found for his work a publisher in Millan, a bookseller, who undertook the venture in 1726, after several other members of the trade had declined it. It was dedicated to Spencer Compton, but remained unnoticed by him, till his neglect was publicly rebuked by Aaron Hill in a copy of verses addressed to Thomson. Compton then made Thomson a present of twenty guineas, and *Winter* gradually acquired reputation. Thomson's advance was afterwards rapid. He became a friend of Pope, and his acquaintance was sought, among others, by Rundle, Bishop of Derry, who introduced him to the Solicitor-General, Sir Charles Talbot. In 1727 he published *Summer*, inscribing it to Bubb Dodington; *Spring* followed in 1728, under the patronage of the Countess of Hertford, afterwards Duchess of Somerset. Thomson also wrote in 1727 an elegiac poem in memory of Sir Isaac Newton, whose various discoveries he celebrated in the same kind of blank verse that he employed in describing the Seasons. *Autumn*, the last of this series to be published, appeared in 1730, as part of Thomson's collected works, being dedicated to the Speaker, Onslow. In this year he was engaged by the Solicitor-General to travel with his son on the Continent, and

[1] *Poetical Works of James Thomson* (D. C. Tovey), p. xx.

the effects of his new experience on his imagination are plainly visible in *Liberty*, written after his return to England in 1730 and published in 1734. The poem opens with an address to his pupil, to whom he was much attached, and who had died while it was being composed. It was dedicated to Frederick, Prince of Wales, and was largely inspired by the genius of the Opposition, then under the management of Bolingbroke. Thomson had been early brought into this political connection by his friendship with Lyttelton, the Prince's Secretary, and had given expression to his sentiments in *Britannia*, a poem written in 1727, which, while extolling the blessings of peace, inveighed against Walpole's foreign policy for its failure to assert England's supremacy at sea.

He was to some extent a sufferer for his political opinions. Talbot, when made Lord Chancellor, had rewarded him for his tutorship by giving him the sinecure post of Secretary of the Briefs, but he lost this when Lord Hardwick became Lord Chancellor in 1737. The displeasure of the Ministry also curtailed his profits on the stage. His tragedy *Sophonisba* had been acted before a full house on 28th February 1730, and *Agamemnon* was produced in 1738, with equal exertion on the part of his patrons, especially of Pope. But *Edward and Eleonora*—modelled on the *Alcestis* of Euripides[1]—which was to have come upon the stage in 1739, was prohibited on account of the hostility of the censor to Thomson. Being introduced by Lyttelton to the Prince of Wales, and asked about the state of his affairs, Thomson replied that "they were in a more poetical position than formerly," and in consequence the Prince granted him a pension of £100 a year. In 1740 he wrote, in co-operation with Mallet, the masque of *Alfred*, which was acted before the Prince of Wales at Cliefden House on the birthday of the Princess Augusta: in this appeared the song, "Rule Britannia" He appears to have resided at this time in Kew where Frederick held his Court; and the Amanda so frequently mentioned in his poems was a Miss Young,

[1] *Poetical Works of James Thomson* (D. C. Tovey), p. lxv.

He was himself at the time of his father's death at the University of Edinburgh, preparing for ordination. Having in the course of his probation to expound a psalm, his diction was so ornate that he is said to have been reproved by the professor of Divinity for using language which could not be understood by the people; it seems, however, that Johnson exaggerates when he says that Thomson hence became disgusted with theology, and determined to devote himself to poetry.[1] He had composed in verse from his early boyhood, and he was encouraged by Lady Grizzel Baillie, a friend of his mother, who advised him to try his fortune in London, and promised him assistance. Thomson came there, accordingly, in 1725, bringing with him the *disjecta membra* of his *Winter* which he showed to his friend Mallet, who advised him to cast them into a single poem. This he did, and found for his work a publisher in Millan, a bookseller, who undertook the venture in 1726, after several other members of the trade had declined it. It was dedicated to Spencer Compton, but remained unnoticed by him, till his neglect was publicly rebuked by Aaron Hill in a copy of verses addressed to Thomson. Compton then made Thomson a present of twenty guineas, and *Winter* gradually acquired reputation. Thomson's advance was afterwards rapid. He became a friend of Pope, and his acquaintance was sought, among others, by Rundle, Bishop of Derry, who introduced him to the Solicitor-General, Sir Charles Talbot. In 1727 he published *Summer*, inscribing it to Bubb Dodington; *Spring* followed in 1728, under the patronage of the Countess of Hertford, afterwards Duchess of Somerset. Thomson also wrote in 1727 an elegiac poem in memory of Sir Isaac Newton, whose various discoveries he celebrated in the same kind of blank verse that he employed in describing the Seasons. *Autumn*, the last of this series to be published, appeared in 1730, as part of Thomson's collected works, being dedicated to the Speaker, Onslow. In this year he was engaged by the Solicitor-General to travel with his son on the Continent, and

[1] *Poetical Works of James Thomson* (D. C. Tovey), p. xx.

the effects of his new experience on his imagination are plainly visible in *Liberty*, written after his return to England in 1730 and published in 1734. The poem opens with an address to his pupil, to whom he was much attached, and who had died while it was being composed. It was dedicated to Frederick, Prince of Wales, and was largely inspired by the genius of the Opposition, then under the management of Bolingbroke. Thomson had been early brought into this political connection by his friendship with Lyttelton, the Prince's Secretary, and had given expression to his sentiments in *Britannia*, a poem written in 1727, which, while extolling the blessings of peace, inveighed against Walpole's foreign policy for its failure to assert England's supremacy at sea.

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[1] *Poetical Works of James Thomson* (D. C. Tovey), p. lxv.

sister of Mrs. Robertson, the wife of the surgeon to the Prince's Household.

After the appearance of *Alfred* the political atmosphere seems to cool in his work. *Tancred and Sigismunda*, the most successful of his tragedies, which aims almost entirely at the pathetic, was acted at Drury Lane in 1745, and *The Castle of Indolence*, published in 1746, is an example of the tendency, then exhibited in many poets, to veil modern sentiments under antique literary forms. Thomson's circumstances, which had seldom been distressing, were now easy. In 1746 Lyttelton, who had come into power, made him Surveyor-General to the Leeward Islands, a place which he was allowed to fill by means of a deputy, and which, after making the necessary deduction, brought him in £300. He had not, however, been long in enjoyment of his new prosperity when he was carried off by a fever on the 27th of August 1748. His body was buried at Richmond, but a monument was erected to him in Westminster Abbey in 1762, the expense of which was defrayed by the profits arising out of an edition of his works issued by his friend Andrew Millar, the bookseller who had published *Spring*.

Johnson says: "As a writer Thomson is entitled to one praise of the highest kind,—his mode of thinking, and of expressing his thoughts is original."[1] With a certain qualification this judgment may be accepted. Thomson, like all poets of real genius, is, in the best and highest sense of the word "original," that is to say he impresses on whatever he writes the stamp of his individual character. But he is not unique in the way that Donne and Young are unique. His "mode of thinking" in *The Seasons* is partly inspired by Virgil, partly by the Deistical tendencies of the day: in the "expression of his thoughts," he directly imitates both Milton and the author of *Cider*. *Liberty*, in its sentiment, though not in its form, is an expansion of Addison's *Letter to Halifax*. *The Castle of Indolence* is an obvious imitation of Spenser's manner in *The Faery Queen*.

[1] *Lives of the Poets: Thomson.*

The mixture of imaginative elements peculiar to the time is very apparent in *The Seasons.* Prominent among these is the influence of Deism. Not that Thomson shows any traces of the aggressive anti-Christianity of Tindal and Bolingbroke; but there is a conspicuous absence in his poem of Christian theology; his arguments, wherever these appear, are based on observation of Nature; his sentiments are coloured by the vague idea of the benevolence of God, which a loose-thinking and luxurious society regarded as His main attribute. Thomson moved in the intellectual orbit of Bolingbroke's disciples, and his view of Natural Religion doubtless reflected the creed then held by enthusiastic young men of distinction like Lyttelton. The following passages from the different *Seasons* will sufficiently indicate the source of his "mode of thinking." In *Spring* he accounts thus for the power of Love:—

> What is this mighty breath, ye sages, say,
> That in a powerful language, felt, not heard,
> Instructs the fowls of heaven, and through their breast
> These arts of love diffuses? What, but God?
> Inspiring God! who, boundless spirit all,
> And unremitting energy, pervades,
> Adjusts, sustains, and agitates the whole
> He ceaseless works alone, and yet alone
> Seems not to work · with such perfection framed
> Is this complex stupendous scheme of things
> But though concealed, to every purer eye
> The informing Author in His works appears
> Chief, lovely Spring, in thee, and thy soft scenes,
> The smiling God is seen: while water, earth,
> And air, attest his bounty; which exalts
> The brute creation to this finer thought,
> And annual melts their undesigning hearts,
> Profusely thus in tenderness and joy.[1]

From the light and colour of the Season he rises, in *Summer*, to the following thoughts:—

> How shall I then attempt to sing of Him,
> Who, light Himself, in uncreated light
> Invested deep, dwells awfully retired

[1] *The Seasons. Spring*, 846-863

From mortal eye, or angel's purer ken;
Whose single smile has from the first of time
Filled to o'erflowing all those lamps of heaven,
That beam for ever through the boundless sky:
But should He hide His face, th' astonished sun,
And all th' extinguished stars, would, loosening, reel
Wide from their sphere, and Chaos come again.
  And yet, was every faltering tongue of man,
Almighty Father, silent in Thy praise,
Thy works themselves would raise a general voice,
Ev'n in the depth of solitary woods,
By human foot untrod, proclaim Thy power,
And to the quire celestial Thee resound,
Th' eternal cause, support, and end of all.[1]

In *Autumn*, the recollection of Virgil's lines, "Felix qui potuit," etc., suggest to him a peroration on the graduated scale of Creation:—

O Nature! all-sufficient! over all!
Enrich me with the knowledge of thy works!
Snatch me to heaven; thy rolling wonder there,
World beyond world, in infinite extent,
Profusely scattered o'er the blue immense,
Show me! their motions, periods, and their laws,
Give me to scan! through the disclosing deep
Light my blind way! the mineral strata there;
Thrust, blooming, thence the vegetable world;
O'er that the rising system, more complex,
Of animals; and higher still the mind,
The various scene of quick compounded thought;
And when the mixing passions endless shift,
These ever open to my ravished eye;
A search the flight of time can ne'er exhaust!
But if to that unequal; if the blood,
In sluggish streams about my heart, forbid
That *best* ambition; under closing shades,
Inglorious, lay me by the lowly brook,
And whisper to my dreams! From thee begin,
Dwell all on thee, with thee conclude my song;
And let me never, never, stray from thee![2]

The hope of Immortality consoles him in the conclusion of *Winter*; but it is observable that his hope, like that of the Deists, is founded entirely on the teaching of Nature and Reason:—

[1] *The Seasons: Summer*, 173-191. [2] *Ibid. Autumn*, 1350-1371.

All now are vanished! Virtue sole survives,
Immortal, never-failing friend of man,
His guide to happiness on high. And see!
'Tis come, the glorious morn! the second birth
Of heaven and earth! awakening Nature hears
The new-creating word, and starts to life,
In every heightened form, from pain and death
For ever free. The great eternal scheme,
Involving all, and in a perfect whole
Uniting, as the prospect wider spreads,
To Reason's eye refined clears up apace.
Ye vainly wise! ye blind presumptuous! now,
Confounded in the dust, adore that Power
And Wisdom, oft arraigned! see now the cause
Why unassuming worth in secret lived,
And died, neglected: why the good man's share
In life was gall and bitterness of soul.
Why the lone widow and her orphans pined
In starving solitude; while luxury,
In palaces, lay straining her low thought
To form unreal wants: why heaven-born truth,
And moderation fair, wore the red mark
Of superstition's scourge: why licensed pain
That cruel spoiler, that embosomed foe,
Embittered all our bliss! Ye good distrest!
Ye noble few, who here unbending stand
Beneath life's pressure, yet bear up a while,
And what your bounded view, which only saw
A little part, deemed evil, is no more:
The storms of wintry time will quickly pass,
And one unbounded Spring encircle all.[1]

After the element of Natural Religion the most prominent feature in *The Seasons* is the predominance of the patriotic and social spirit, reflecting the aristocratic Whiggism of the age. In *Summer*, Thomson, following the steps of Virgil in his second *Georgic*, has a long passage in praise of Britain and her political liberty.[2] From the praises of his country he passes with artistic skill to compliment the ruling aristocracy, his liberal patrons. He describes Lyttelton, wandering with his Lucinda among the woods and waterfalls of Hagley;[3] Dodington, his

Youthful muse's early friend,
In whom the human graces all unite:

[1] *The Seasons: Winter*, 1039-1069. [2] *Ibid Summer*, 1441-1600.
[3] *Ibid. Spring*, 901-932.

Pure light of mind, and tenderness of heart;
Genius and wisdom; the gay social sense,
By decency chastised; goodness and wit,
In seldom-meeting harmony combined:
Unblemished honour, and an active zeal
For Britain's glory, liberty, and man;[1]

Pitt, meditating at Stowe in Cobham's Temple of Virtue

Where, in future times,
Thou well shalt merit a distinguished name;[2]

and, with a touch of anti-Ministerial malice Cobham himself:—

While thus we talk and in Elysian vales
Delighted rove, perhaps a sigh escapes:
What pity, Cobham, thou thy verdant files
Of ordered trees shouldst here inglorious range,
Instead of squadrons flaming o'er the field,
And long, embattled hosts! where the proud foe,
The faithless, vain, disturber of mankind,
Insulting Gaul, has roused the world to war;
When keen, once more, within their bounds to press
Those polished robbers, those ambitious slaves,
The British youth would hail thy wise command,
Thy tempered ardour, and thy veteran skill.[3]

In spite of its strongly English character few poems have been more popular on the Continent than *The Seasons*. It has been translated into French, German, Danish, Italian, and Romaic.

In *Liberty* there is not much that calls for remark; but *The Castle of Indolence* is one of the most charming compositions in the English language. Conceived by Thomson in a sympathetic spirit, it reflects at once his own character, and the luxury, the public spirit, and the artistic taste of his age, in a beautiful and musical form. The modern allegory is perfectly suggested under the semi-antique veil of the Spenserian stanza:—

Full in the passage of the vale, above,
A sable, silent, solemn forest stood;
Where nought but shadowy forms was seen to move
As Idless fancied in her dreaming mood:

[1] *The Seasons: Summer*, 21-32. [2] *Ibid. Autumn*, 1048-1049.
[3] *Ibid. Autumn*, 1068-1079.

And up the hills, on either side, a wood
Of blackening pines, aye waving to and fro,
Sent forth a sleepy horror through the blood;
And where this valley winded out, below,
The murmuring main was heard, and scarcely heard, to flow.

A pleasing land of drowsyhead it was,
Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye,
And of gay castles in the clouds that pass,
For ever flushing round a summer sky;
There eke the soft delights, that witchingly
Instil a wanton sweetness through the breast,
And the calm pleasures always hovered nigh;
But whate'er smacked of noyance or unrest
Was far far off expelled from this delicious nest.[1]

Such were the seats of the English aristocracy in the eighteenth century—the Stowes and the Eastburys, whose owners loved their country homes and the pleasures of art, literature, and conversation. The poet, however, recognises the moral dangers of this luxurious life. *The Castle of Indolence* is the abode of "a most enchanting wizard,"

Than whom a fiend more fell is nowhere found,

and who destroys the souls of those whom he lures into his power, after the fashion of the Fays, Circe and Alcina. The arts by which he accomplishes his ends are described with an unrivalled luxury of language; and among them the growth in England of the taste for landscape painting is indicated with exquisite propriety:—

Those pleased the most, where, by a cunning hand,
Depainted was the patriarchal age;
What time Dan Abram left the Chaldee land,
And pastured on from verdant stage to stage,
Where fields and fountains fresh could best engage.
Toil was not then. Of nothing took they heed,
But with wild beasts the sylvan war to wage,
And o'er vast plains their herds and flocks to feed:
Blest sons of Nature they! true Golden Age indeed!

Sometimes the pencil in cool airy halls
Bade the gay bloom of vernal landscapes rise,

[1] *Castle of Indolence*, Canto i. St. 5-6.

Or autumn's varied shades embrown the walls:
Now the black tempest strikes the astonished eyes,
Now down the steep the flashing torrent flies;
The trembling sun now plays o'er ocean blue,
And now rude mountains frown amid the skies;
Whate'er Lorraine light-touched with softening hue,
Or savage Rosa dashed, or learned Poussin drew.[1]

That the moral indignation with which the poet—who had himself been a prisoner in the Castle—regarded these enchantments was not very strong may be divined from the following stanza:—

No, fair illusions! artful phantoms, no!
My muse will not attempt your fairy-land:
She has no colours that like you can glow:
To catch your vivid scenes too gross her hand.
But sure it is was ne'er a subtler band
Than these same guileful angel-seeming sprights,
Who thus, in dreams voluptuous and bland,
Poured all the Arabian heaven upon her nights,
And blessed them oft besides with more refined delights.[2]

Of the captives in the Castle the characters of some are portrayed with an equally sympathetic pencil. Among them are Lyttelton, Quin the actor, and Murdoch, Thomson's biographer. Particularly interesting is Thomson's view of his own slothful disposition, of which he was so conscious that he talked of writing an Eastern tale *Of the Man who loved to be in Distress*:—

Of all the gentle tenants of the place
There was a man of special grave remark:
A certain tender gloom o'erspread his face,
Pensive not sad, in thought involved, not dark;
As soon this man could sing as morning lark;
And teach the noblest morals of the heart:
But these his talents were so buried stark;
Of the fine stores he nothing could impart
Which or boon Nature gave, or Nature-painting Art.

To noontide shades incontinent he ran,
Where purls the brook with sleep-inviting sound,
Or when Dan Sol to slope his wheels began,
Amid the broom he basked him on the ground,
Where the wild thyme and camomoil are found:

[1] *Castle of Indolence*, Canto i. St. 37-38. [2] *Ibid.* Canto i. St. 45.

There would he linger till the latest ray
Of light sat trembling on the welkin's bound;
Then homeward through the twilight shadows stray,
Sauntering and slow. So had he passed full many a day.

Yet not in thoughtless slumber were they past;
For oft the heavenly fire, that lay concealed
Beneath the sleeping embers, mounted fast,
And all its native light anew revealed:
Oft as he traversed the cerulean field,
And marked the clouds that drove before the wind,
[illegible] [1]

With this portrait of himself may be compared his picture, as painted by his contemporary, Armstrong, in the following stanza inserted in the poem:—

A bard here dwelt, more fat than bard beseems;
Who void of envy, guile, and lust of gain,
On virtue still, and virtue's pleasing themes,
Poured forth his unpremeditated strain:
The world forsaking with a calm disdain;
Here laughed he careless in his easy seat;
Here quaffed, encircled with the joyous train,
Oft moralising sage; his ditty sweet
He loathèd much to write, nor carèd to repeat [2]

How the wizard spread his power over Britain, and how the Castle of Indolence was destroyed by Sir Industry, is related in the second canto. Thomson's patriotism and public spirit shine in his description of the growing commercial and maritime greatness of his country, and the refinement of national taste—a favourite topic with him:—

The towns he quickened by mechanic arts,
And bade the fervent city glow with toil;
Bade social commerce raise renowned marts,
Join land to land, and marry soil to soil,
Unite the poles, and without bloody spoil
Bring home of either Ind the gorgeous stores;
Or should despotic rage the world embroil,
Bade tyrants tremble on remotest shores
While o'er the encircling deep Britannia's thunder roars.

[1] *Castle of Indolence*, Canto i. St. 57-59.
[2] *Ibid.* Canto i. St. 68.

The drooping muses then he westward called
From the famed city by Propontic sea,
What time the Turk the enfeebled Grecian thralled;
Thence from their cloistered walks he set them free,
And brought them to another Castalie,
Where Isis many a famous nurseling breeds;
Or where old Cam soft paces o'er the lea,
In pensive mood, and tunes his Doric reeds,
The whilst his flocks at large the lonely shepherd feeds.[1]

As the genius of Thomson was at once contemplative and eminently social, so his style reflects on its surface the colours of many blended literary traditions. Johnson, who quite failed to understand the artistic texture of Milton's blank verse in *Paradise Lost*, praises that of Thomson in *The Seasons*. He says:—

His blank verse is no more the blank verse of Milton, or of any other poet, than the rhymes of Prior are the rhymes of Cowley. His numbers, his pauses, his diction, are of his own growth, without transcription, without imitation. . . . His is one of the works in which blank verse seems properly used. Thomson's wide expansion of general views, and his enumeration of circumstantial varieties, would have been obstructed and embarrassed by the frequent intersecting of the sense, which are the necessary effects of rhyme.[2]

Yet it is impossible to read ten lines of the more purely descriptive parts of *The Seasons*, without perceiving that the style is derived in its groundwork from Milton's majestic and complex system of metrical harmony, on which I have dwelt in the third volume of this History;[3] and the reason which Johnson gives for the impropriety of the heroic couplet, as a vehicle for the subject-matter of Thomson's poem, applies with tenfold force to the matter of *Paradise Lost*. In the constant Latinism of his diction, Milton's example is ever before the eyes of the eighteenth century poet. Thomson's generalised, classical, quasi-scientific mode of description—so full of dim atmospheric effects, so closely analogous to the landscape painting of the period, so unlike the particularity of detail

[1] *Castle of Indolence*, Canto ii. St. 20-21. [2] *Lives of the Poets: Thomson.*
[3] Vol. iii. chap. xiv.

in Wordsworth and many modern painters—may be exemplified from any page of *The Seasons*.

Miltonic too is the frequent Latinism of constructions like these:—

Bids his driving sleets
Deform the day delightless;[1]
Winds and waters flowed
In consonance Such were those prime of days.[2]

Or the absolute use of participles, such as:—

Increasing still the terrors of these storms,
His jaws horrific armed with three-fold fate,
Here dwells the direful shark![3]

He goes beyond Milton in the use of inversions, which sometimes make his sense obscure, *e.g.*:—

On whose luxuriant herbage, half concealed,
Like a fall'n cedar, far diffused his train,
Cased in green scale, the crocodile extends.[4]

Or:—

Crowned with the sickle and the wheaten sheaf
While Autumn, nodding o'er the yellow plain,
Comes jovial on, the Doric reed once more
Well-pleased I tune.[5]

where it is obviously meant, contrary to the grammar, that Autumn is crowned with the sickle and sheaf.

With Milton's manner Thomson very skilfully blends the didactic vein of John Philips, as in the passage describing the husbandman destroying the plague of insects in Spring:—

To check this plague the skilful farmer chaff
And blazing straw before his orchard burns;
Till all involved in smoke the latent foe
From every cranny suffocated falls:
Or scatters o'er the blooms the pungent dust
Of pepper, fatal to the frosty tribe:
Or when the envenomed leaf begins to curl
With sprinkled water drowns them in their nest;
Nor, while they pick them up with busy bill,
The little trooping birds unwisely scares[6]

[1] *The Seasons: Spring*, 20-21.
[2] *Ibid. Spring*, 269-270.
[3] *Ibid. Summer*, 1013-1015.
[4] *Ibid. Summer*, 706-708.
[5] *Ibid. Autumn*, 1-4.
[6] *Ibid. Spring*, 126-135.

Many of the poetical qualities that shine in *The Seasons* are reproduced in *The Pleasures of the Imagination*; but they appear there in a more abstract and philosophic form. The poetry of *The Seasons* is largely inherent in the subject, but in the later poem, as in the series of didactic compositions by other poets that followed it—*The Pleasures of Hope* and *The Pleasures of Memory*—the treatment depends almost entirely on the genius of the author, and this offers a vivid contrast to the indolent, good-natured, and unambitious character of Thomson.

Mark Akenside was the son of a butcher at Newcastle-upon-Tyne. He was born there on the 9th of November 1721, and was educated partly at the Grammar School of the town, partly at a private school kept by a Mr. Wilson, a dissenting minister, from whose care he was sent, at the age of eighteen, to the University of Edinburgh, to study Nonconformist theology. As was the case with Thomson, this proved irksome to him, and after a short experience he turned his attention to medicine. Like Thomson also he had begun to write verse at an early age: indeed it is said that *The Pleasures of the Imagination* was written before he went to Edinburgh. At the University he lived much in literary society, and wrote there his *Ode on the Winter Solstice*. Leaving Edinburgh for Leyden in 1741, he studied medicine for three years in that University, and formed a strong friendship with Jeremiah Dyson, afterwards Secretary to the Treasury, who was studying Civil Law in the same place. He took his degree of Doctor in Physic on 16th May 1744, and in his inaugural discourse *De ortu et incremento fœtus humani* displayed much scientific ability in attacking the opinions prevailing on that subject, as well as in maintaining an hypothesis of his own.

In the year before he had offered to Dodsley his *Pleasures of Imagination*, asking for it £120. The publisher, being somewhat startled at the price, consulted Pope, who advised him to accept the venture, "as this was no every-day poet." The poem proved very successful; but being inspired throughout by the Deistical *Characteristics* of

Shaftesbury—called by Akenside "the noble restorer of ancient philosophy"—it incurred the hostility of Warburton, who attacked it severely in a postscript to his "Dedication to the Free-Thinker" prefixed to *The Divine Legation.* This was the origin of Akenside's dislike to Warburton, which appears so strongly in his *Ode to Thomas Edwardes, Esquire, on the late Edition of Mr. Pope's Works.*

Akenside, like many of the literary physicians of the eighteenth century, was a vehement Whig, whose political opinions indeed seem to have carried him far towards Republicanism. He sympathised with the Whig element in the Parliamentary Opposition which attacked Walpole for his tame foreign policy, and, soon after his return to England in 1744, he published his bitter *Epistle to Curio* against Pulteney, who (as may be seen from many allusions in Pope's *Satires*) was then in special disfavour with this faction, as being a deserter from their cause. He also carried his politics into his profession, to his own detriment, and after attempting without success to obtain a practice as a physician in Northampton, he was forced to leave that town and to try his fortune in London, where he was most generously supported by his friend Dyson. Towards the end of his life Akenside became a Tory.

He seems to have attained in medicine a position of some distinction, for he was in time elected a Fellow of the Royal Society, received by "mandamus" the degree of Doctor in Physic from the University of Cambridge, was appointed Physician to St. Thomas's Hospital, Fellow of the College of Physicians, Gulstonian Lecturer, and finally Physician to Queen Charlotte. He also published many medical treatises, one of which, *Dissertatio de Dysenteria*, was celebrated as a specimen of pure Latinity. His classical scholarship indeed was constantly intruding upon his sphere of practice, and when Cronian Lecturer he took for his subject the History of the Revival of Learning, but dropped it in consequence of the objection made by members of the College of Physicians, that it did not fall within the objects of the institution

In his practice as a physician he was doubtless in-

jured by his own aggressive temper. A regular frequenter of Tom's Coffee-House in Devereux Court, he became notorious for the bitterness of his political and literary disputes, which on one occasion nearly involved him in a duel with a certain Counsellor Ballow: this is said by Sir John Hawkins to have been only prevented by the impracticable resolutions of the two would-be combatants, of whom one would not fight in the morning nor the other in the evening.[1] After the publication of *The Pleasures of Imagination* (1744) and *Odes on Several Subjects* (1745), his poetical compositions seem to have been quite occasional. Recognising that his earliest work was immature, he occupied himself with recasting it, but left the new form incomplete. From time to time he was inspired to write by passing events, which roused his Whig sympathies. In 1747 the political situation prompted him, in an *Ode to the Earl of Huntingdon*, to review the triumphs of English Liberty: in 1749 he evoked the spirit of Shakespeare to remonstrate against the invasion of the stage by a troop of French comedians; the old dissenting tradition animated in 1754 an ode to the aged and latitudinarian Bishop Hoadly: he issued in 1758 a poetical address *To the Country Gentlemen of England*, as a protest against the Tory tradition of non-intervention in Continental politics:—

Say then, if England's youth in earlier days
On glory's field with well-trained armies vied,
Why shall they now renounce that generous praise?
Why dread the foreign mercenary's pride?
Though Valois braved young Edward's gentle hand,
And Albert's rushed on Henry's way-worn band,
With Europe's chosen sons in arms renowned,
Yet not on Vere's bold archers long they looked,
Nor Audley's squires, nor Mowbray's yeomen brooked:
They saw their standard fall, and left their monarch bound.

Though *The Pleasures of Imagination* was coloured by the Deistical opinions of Shaftesbury, Akenside protested against the principles of Atheism professed by Frederick of Prussia in his Memoirs of the House of Brandenburg. Addressing (1751) the spirits of the great statesmen of antiquity, he exclaims:—

[1] Anderson's *Poets of Great Britain*, vol. ix. "Life of Akenside."

Ye godlike shades of legislators old,
Ye who made Rome victorious, Athens wise,
Ye first of mortals, with the blest enrolled,
Say, did not horror in your bosoms rise,
When thus, by impious vanity impelled,
A magistrate, a monarch, ye beheld
Affronting civil order's holiest bands?
Those bands which ye so laboured to improve?
Those hopes and fears of justice from above,
Which tamed the savage world to your divine commands?

He died of a putrid fever on 23rd June 1770, and was buried in the parish church of St. James's, Westminster.

By carrying didactic poetry from the objects of Nature into the recesses of the human mind, Akenside showed an inclination to remove the art from its native regions into the territories of metaphysic. Poetry of any kind must deal with the *images* suggested by objects, actions, and passions, rather than with the analysis of causes; and, in all classical didactic poems, the finest passages are descriptive, satiric, or rhetorical. But Akenside's design was mainly philosophical. He describes it thus:—

The design of the following poem is to give a view of these [*i.e.* the Pleasures of the Imagination] in the largest acceptation of the term, so that whatever our imagination feels from the agreeable appearances of nature, and all the various entertainments we meet with, either in poetry, painting, music, or any of the elegant arts, might be deducible from one or other of those principles in the constitution of the human mind which are here established and explained.

It is a significant fact that, in his later years, Akenside's sense of what was poetical in his subject was more and more oppressed by his philosophy. When first published, *The Pleasures of Imagination* consisted of three books, of which the first treated the sources of imagination; the second described the character of its pleasures; the third dealt more particularly with the operations of art. The structure of the poem was somewhat piecemeal, as might be expected from the author's youth; the theory of Addison in his essays on the imagination being joined with the Deistical speculations of Shaftesbury's *Charac-*

teristics and Hutcheson's *Enquiry into the Original of our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue.* Though, in its first form, there was a marked absence of those episodes and digressions, artfully inserted, which give the charm of variety to *The Seasons*, the poem had then an impulse, an ardour of personal enthusiasm, and a decorative fancy, which revealed the inspiration of genius. In later years, as his powers of thought matured, Akenside became dissatisfied with his work, and he recast it entirely, making the theory more regular, and removing what was fanciful and ornamental. Johnson says of the reformed poem: "He seems somewhat to have contracted his diffusion, but I know not whether he has gained in closeness what he has lost in splendour"; and this sentence is just, for though the general system is made more coherent, it is not more interesting, and the preserved passages of the early version have lost in the revised context much of their youthful life and heat. Whoever desires to make the acquaintance of this poet should study *The Pleasures of Imagination* as it first appeared.

In Akenside the genius of the Classical Renaissance in England is seen in its last development, and tending to an abstract form of expression. His mixed Stoicism and Humanism is reflected in the following characteristic panegyric of ancient philosophy:—

O let not us,
Lulled by luxurious pleasure's languid strain,
Or crouching to the frowns of bigot rage,
O let us not a moment pause to join
That god-like band. And if the gracious power,
Who first awakened my untutored song,
Will to my invocation breathe anew
The tuneful spirit; then through all our paths
Ne'er shall the sound of this devoted lyre
Be wanting, whether on the rosy mead,
When summer smiles, to warn the melting heart
Of luxury's allurement; whether, firm
Against the torrent and the stubborn hill,
To urge bold Virtue's unremitted nerve,
And wake the strong divinity of soul,
That conquers chance and fate; or whether struck
For sounds of triumph, to proclaim her toils

Upon the lofty summit, round her brow
To twine the wreath of incorruptive praise;
To trace her hallowed light through future worlds,
And bless heaven's image in the heart of man.

The foregoing passage does not appear in the second version, but what follows is expanded, without being improved, in the re-cast:—

Genius of ancient Greece! whose faithful steps
Well-pleased I follow through the sacred paths
Of nature and of science, nurse divine
Of all heroic deeds and fair desires!
O! let the breath of thy extended praise
Inspire my kindling bosom to the height
Of this untempted theme. Nor be my thoughts
Presumptuous counted, if amid the calm
That soothes this vernal evening into smiles,
I steal impatient from the sordid haunts
Of strife and low ambition, to attend
Thy sacred presence in the sylvan shade,
By their malignant footsteps ne'er profaned.
Descend, propitious! to my favoured eye
Such in thy mien, thy warm exalted air,
As when the Persian tyrant, foiled and stung
With shame and desperation, gnashed his teeth
To see thee rend the pageants of his throne;
And at the lightning of thy lifted spear
Crouched like a slave. Bring all thy martial spoils,
Thy palms, thy laurels, thy triumphal songs,
Thy smiling band of arts, thy god-like fires
Of civil wisdom, thy heroic youth,
Warm from the schools of glory. Guide my way
Through fair Lyceum's walk, the green retreats
Of Academus, and the thymy vale,
Where, oft enchanted with Socratic sounds,
Ilissus pure devolved his tuneful stream
In gentler murmurs From the blooming store
Of these auspicious fields may I, unblamed,
Transplant some living blossoms to adorn
My native clime: while, far above the flight
Of fancy's plume aspiring, I unlock
The springs of ancient wisdom! while I join
Thy name, thrice honoured! with the immortal praise
Of nature, while to my compatriot youth
I point the high example of thy sons,
And tune to Attic themes the British lyre.

The cultivation of the classical style, which everywhere accompanied the development of the Renaissance on its civil side, is sufficiently illustrated in these passages. Johnson says of Akenside's manner:—

His diction is certainly poetical, as it is not prosaic, and elegant, as it is not vulgar. He is to be commended as having fewer artifices of disgust than most of his brethren of the blank song. He rarely either recalls old phrases, or twists his metre into harsh inversions. The sense, however, of his words is strained when "he views the Ganges from Alpine heights," that is from mountains like the Alps. And the pedant surely intrudes (but when was blank verse without pedantry?) when he tells us how "planets absolve the stated round of time."[1]

Partisan prejudice against Whiggery, dissent, and blank verse, struggling with a sense of justice, here amusingly result in one of those negative appreciations which are so characteristic of Johnson's criticism. The judgment, nevertheless, is by no means unfair. The style of Akenside is plainly an offshoot of the Miltonic mode of blank verse, which he imitates mainly in the variety of his pauses, abstaining, as a rule, from the Latin constructions and inversions in *Paradise Lost*, which Thomson multiplied in *The Seasons*. A classical severity and simplicity characterises the versification of *The Pleasures of Imagination*, suited to the masculine cast of its philosophic thought, but somewhat trying to the reader, who often longs for green oases of fancy and luxuriant rills of description by which to repose himself in his arid journey. The austere course of imaginative reflection seems to anticipate the style of Wordsworth's *Excursion*, and lies midway between the florid Latinism of Thomson and the avoidance of "poetic diction" characteristic of the Lake poet. Johnson, who judged all kinds of blank verse, as one who had cultivated the colloquial idiom, refined in the heroic couplet, could not bring himself to more than negative praise of the metre in *The Pleasures of Imagination*, which, however, contains many passages of pure and noble English. Nor is he

[1] *Lives of the Poets: Akenside.*

altogether just in his scorn of Akenside's lyric verse of which he says :—

It is not easy to guess why he addicted himself so diligently to lyric poetry, having neither the ease and airiness of the lighter, nor the vehemence and elevation of the grander ode. When he lays his ill-fated hand upon the harp, his former powers seem to desert him; he has no longer his luxuriance of expression, nor variety of images. His thoughts are cold, and his words inelegant. Yet such was his love of lyrics that, having once written with great [illegible]sformed it after- [illegible] the sentiments commonly want force, nature, or novelty; the diction is sometimes harsh and uncouth; the stanzas ill-constructed and unpleasant, and the rhymes dissonant or unskilfully disposed, too distant from each other, or arranged with too little regard to established use, and therefore unpleasing to the ear, which, in a short composition, has no time to grow familiar with an innovation.[1]

Akenside wrote in lyric verse because he desired to express strong philosophic and political sentiments. These were not confined to his own breast, but were the common inheritance of his party; and the matter for his odes therefore lies between the purely personal feeling expressed in the songs of a Court poet like Suckling, and the abstract thought found in the "Pindarics" of Cowley. The "vehemence and elevation of the grander ode" could scarcely be expected in compositions animated by the spirit of Akenside's Odes to the Earl of Huntingdon, Charles Townshend, the Bishop of Winchester, and the Country Gentlemen of England; in all of which may be found the last dying impulse of Whig panegyric, poured forth so abundantly in the previous generation, to celebrate the genius of "great Nassau." The following passage from the Ode *To Charles Townshend in the Country* will illustrate what Johnson says, with some justice, about the distribution of Akenside's rhymes; but it also shows that the lyrics of the latter are by no means wanting in character and dignity :—

[1] *Lives of the Poets: Akenside.*

II. 1

Thee, Townshend, not the arms
Of slumbering ease, nor pleasure's rosy chain
Were destined to detain:
No, nor bright Science, nor the Muse's charms.
For them high heaven prepares
Their proper votaries, an humbler band:
And ne'er would Spenser's hand
Have deigned to strike the warbling Tuscan shell,
Nor Harrington to tell
What habit an immortal City wears;

II. 2

Had this been born to shield
The cause which Cromwell's impious hand betrayed,
Or that like Vere displayed
His red-cross banner o'er the Belgian field;
Yet where the will divine
Hath shut those loftiest paths, it next remains
With reason, clad in strains
Of harmony, selected minds t' inspire,
And virtue's living fire
To feed and eternise in hearts like thine.

II. 3

For never shall the herd whom envy sways
So quell my purpose, or my tongue control;
That I should fear illustrious worth to praise,
Because its master's friendship moved my soul.
Yet if this undissembling strain
Should now perhaps thine ear detain
With any pleasing sound,
Remember thou that righteous fame
From hoary age a strict account will claim
Of each auspicious palm with which thy youth was crowned.

Lloyd in his *Ode to Genius* addresses Akenside as the

Blest bard, around whose sacred brow
Great Pindar's delegated wreath is hung;

and Akenside shares with Congreve, Collins, and Gray the honour of perceiving, what was apparently hidden from Cowley and his followers in the preceding century

that Pindar's Odes were constructed on a regular musical principle. He had also a keen appreciation of Horace's terse felicity; and in his *Ode to Caleb Hardinge, M.D.*, he strives to reproduce this, with a success which anticipates the work of Tennyson in some of his earlier lyrics:—

With sordid floods the wintry urn
Hath stained fair Richmond's level green;
Her naked hills the Dryads mourn,
No longer a poetic scene.
No longer there thy raptured eye
The beauteous forms of earth and sky
Surveys, as in their author's mind;
And London shelters from the year
Those whom thy social hours to share
The Attic Muse designed.

From Hampstead's airy summit we,
Her guests, the city shall behold,
What day the people's stern decree
To unbelieving kings is told;
When common men (the dread of fame)
Adjudged, as one of evil name,
Before the sun th' anointed head
Then seek thou too the pious town,
With no unworthy cares to crown
That evening's awful shade.

Deem not I call thee to deplore
The sacred martyr of the day,
By fast and penitential lore
To purge our ancient guilt away.
For this on humble faith I rest,
That still our advocate, the priest,
From heavenly wrath will save the land:
Nor ask what rites our pardon gain,
Nor how his potent sounds restrain
The thunderer's lifted hand.

No, Hardinge: peace to Church and State!
That evening let the Muse give law,
While I anew the theme relate
Which my first youth enamoured saw.
Then will I oft explore thy thought,
What to reject which Locke hath taught,
What to pursue in Virgil's lay
Till hope ascends to loftiest things,
Nor envies demagogues or kings
Their frail and vulgar sway.

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What to pursue in Virgil's lay:
Till hope ascends to loftiest things,
Nor envies demagogues or kings
Their frail and vulgar sway.

O versed in all the human frame,
Lead thou where'er my labour lies,
And English fancy's eager flame
To Grecian purity chastise:
While hand in hand at Wisdom's shrine
Beauty with truth I strive to join,
And grave assent with glad applause
To paint the story of the soul,
And Plato's visions to control
With Verulamian laws.

With these four men of original genius the philosophico-political impulse which inspired the didactic school of English poetry in the first half of the eighteenth century seems to have exhausted itself. Others studied the metrical forms and the popular taste which the art of these poets had created, but did not succeed in giving to their own compositions the imprint of individual character. John Armstrong (1709-1779), author of *The Art of Preserving Health*, combines in his poem—which is written in blank verse—some of the descriptive fancy of his friend Thomson with the purer diction of Akenside. David Mallet (1700?-1765), best known as the pretended author of the well-known ballad *William and Margaret*, and as he editor of Bolingbroke's works, imitated the didactic style of Pope in his essay on *Verbal Criticism*; and the style of Thomson in his *Excursion*. In his *Amyntor and Theodora*, after telling a tale of apparently ancient times, in blank verse, which is a unique example of "the nauseous affectation"—to use Warton's phrase—"of expressing everything pompously," he suddenly brings the reader into the previous century by celebrating the landing in Torbay of the "great Nassau":—

They fly! he cried, they melt in air away
The clouds that long fair Albion's heaven o'ercast!
With tempest deluged, or with flame devoured
Her drooping plains: while dawning rosy round
A purer morning lights up all her skies!
He comes, behold! the great deliverer comes,
Immortal *William*, borne triumphant on
From yonder orient o'er propitious seas,
White with the sails of his unnumbered fleet,
A floating forest, stretched from shore to shore! etc. etc.

John Dyer (1700-1758) reproduced in his *Fleece* (1757) the style of John Philips' *Cider*, and in his *Ruins of Rome* (1740) the style of Thomson's *Liberty*. He exhibits, however, very little of Thomson's political spirit; and on the whole what is most characteristic of his verse is the tendency, visible in all the descriptive poetry of this period, to borrow ideas and terms from the art of painting. Pope's *Epistle to Jervas*, Thomson's allusions to the great painters of the classical school in his *Castle of Indolence*, Walter Harte's *Essay on Painting*, all bear witness in different ways to the strength of this movement, which may indeed be traced back as far as Dryden's prose translation of Fresnoy's *Art of Painting*. Dyer himself early embraced the profession of a painter, and formed the design of his *Ruins of Rome* while studying the monuments of ancient art in Italy. The poem is inspired by the picturesque rather than by the historic aspect of the imperial city:—

Enough of Grongar, and the shady dales
Of winding Towy, Merlin's fabled haunts,
I sing inglorious. Now the love of arts,
And what in metal or in stone remains
Of proud antiquity, through various realms
And various languages and ages famed,
Bears me remote, o'er Gallia's woody bounds,
O'er the cloud-piercing Alps remote; beyond
The vale of Arno, purpled with the vine,
Beyond the Umbrian and Etruscan hills,
To Latium's wide champaign, forlorn and waste,
Where yellow Tiber his neglected wave
Mournfully rolls. Yet once again, my muse,
Yet once again, and soar a loftier flight:
Lo, the resistless theme, imperial Rome!

Amid the ruins the poet moralises easily on the fate of luxury and the vanity of all human things; but he shows none of the active enthusiasm for English liberty which characterises the poems of Addison and Thomson on the same subject. Time was reducing the English imagination to a mood of æsthetic quietism. The House of Brunswick was every year establishing itself more firmly on the throne. Wealth and refinement constantly increased, and ecstasies over the Whig triumphs of the

two previous generations were felt to be tedious, if not insincere. Nor was there much more to be said in didactic verse on the subject of Natural, as distinct from Revealed, Religion; for the minds of those who had once been fascinated with the speculations of Shaftesbury were now more inclined to travel along the roads opened to them by Voltaire, Rousseau, and the French Encyclopædists.

CHAPTER XI

RELIGIOUS LYRICAL POETRY IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: INFLUENCE OF THE METHODIST MOVEMENT

ISAAC WATTS; JOHN AND CHARLES WESLEY; WILLIAM COWPER

THE disturbing effect of the Deistic philosophy on the political, social, and literary settlement of 1688 was small. Not only did the works of the so-called "free-thinkers" offer an easy mark to the irony of Swift and the light satire of Young, but, on their own ground of reason, the Deists (with the exception of Hume) were feeble controversialists, and unworthy of such antagonists as Butler and Berkeley. Though it was but a step from the latitudinarian Churchmanship of men like Bishop Hoadly to the Deism of men like Tindal, the arguments offered on behalf of Natural, as opposed to Revealed Religion, while they gave, as I have shown, a certain stimulus to the imagination of the poet, were not qualified to move the heart of the people.

There were, however, numerous constituent elements in English society which found no satisfaction in the religious compromise of the Revolution From the days of Wycliffe to those of Bunyan, thousands of Englishmen had sought a more directly personal outlet for religious emotion than was provided for them in the external order of the Established Church. Religion appealed to them on the mystical side of their nature, through the heart rather than through the head. Those who were influenced by it, whether Nonconformists or Nonjurors, seekers of

monastic quiet or field-preachers, moved apart from the main current of action in Church and State. Excluded, in many cases, after the Revolution from the political offices of citizenship, by the operation of the Test Act and other legislative measures, Englishmen of this kind formed, within the constituted secular society, groups of religious societies resembling the communities of primitive Christians. Each group had its own individual badge of distinction, but all of them being allied among themselves by a common devotional spirit, they may for the purposes of this History be classified under the generic name of "Methodists," and their various forms of poetic expression be examined as if they were manifestations of a single movement. This line of treatment is further justified by the fact that, in the history of English Poetry, Methodism took a form so essentially lyrical that, however they might be divided from each other by their doctrines, the Christian congregations in the country agreed in expressing their religious emotions by means of hymns.

Hymnology had its rise among the Nonconformists. The most powerful current of opinion among the early Reformers, whether Episcopalian or Presbyterian, being Calvinistic, it was natural that for a long time Calvin's ruling with regard to Church music should prevail; and this enjoined the strictest adherence to the text of Scripture. The use of hymns in congregational singing was accordingly almost entirely restricted to paraphrases of the Psalms. But when the struggle with regard to Church Government began between the Episcopalians and the Presbyterians, and when the Arminian tenets were largely adopted by the former, the Puritan party, which, in the early days of Anglicanism, had based its Nonconformity entirely on points of ritual, emphasised its adherence to the five leading principles of Calvinist doctrine. These were constantly insisted on by dissenting preachers in their Conventicles, and the persecution which the sects endured after the Restoration made them enthusiastic defenders of the faith that they believed to be necessary for salvation. The Psalms of David no longer gave utterance to all the religious

feelings of which their hearts were full; but, in the Baptist and Independent Chapels, rude strains in the vulgar tongue began to express the emotions of the worshipper about election, predestination, original sin, assurance, and effectual grace. The want of poetic refinement in the hymns of Barton and Mason, used in the Independent Chapel at Southampton, is said to have inspired to religious composition the first, if not the greatest, of English hymn-writers, Isaac Watts.

He was born at Southampton on the 17th July 1674, being the eldest of the nine children of Isaac Watts, a clothier, who, at the time of his son's birth, was in prison for his religious opinions. The boy was first sent to the grammar school of his native town, then under the charge of John Pinhorne, a member of the Church of England and an excellent scholar, to whom in after years Watts addressed a Latin Pindaric Ode enumerating all his studies, which included such modern Latin poets as George Buchanan and Casimir Sarbiewski, but religiously banished Catullus, Martial, and Ovid.[1] He was afterwards removed to Thomas Rowe's Academy at Stoke Newington, a village which at that period seems to have been a favourite centre for the residence of Nonconformists. There he remained till 1694, and his reputation for scholarship was so high that Dr. Speed, a generous physician, offered to support him at one of the Universities; Watts, however, declined to separate his lot from the Dissenters. In 1696 he was appointed tutor to the son of Sir John Hartopp, of Stoke Newington, a leader among the Nonconformists, who, under James II., had suffered for his opinions To him, in an irregular Latin Ode, Watts confided his desires for a retired and studious life:—

Pro meo tecto casa sit, salubres
Captet Auroras, procul urbis atro
Distet a fumo, fugiatque longe
Dura phthisis mala, dura tussis.
Displicet Byrsa, et fremitu molesto
Turba mercantum; gratius alvear

[1] Milner, *Life and Times of Dr. Isaac Watts*, p 68.

Demulcet aures murmure, gratius
Fons salientis aquae.

. . . . .

Sacri libelli, deliciae meae,
Et vos sodales semper amabiles,
Nunc simul adsitis, nunc vicissim,
Et fallite taedia vitae.

In 1697 he expressed, after the manner of Cowley, in a quasi-Pindaric *Ode* addressed to Freedom, his dislike of the life of Courts:—

Tempt me no more! My soul can ne'er comport
With the gay slaveries of a Court.
I've an aversion to those charms,
And hug dear liberty in both mine arms.
Go, vassal souls, go, cringe, and wait,
And dance attendance at Honorio's gate;
Then run in troops before him to compose his State;
Move as he moves; and when he loiters, stand,
Shadows that wait on his command;
Bend when he speaks, and kiss the ground:
Go catch the impertinence of sound;
Adore the follies of the great;
Wait till he smiles: but lo! the idol frowned,
And drove them to their fate.

He was appointed Pastor of Mark Lane Chapel in 1702, but his health broke down in 1708; and he was then persuaded to make his abode with Sir Thomas and Lady Abney at Theobalds, in which retreat he spent many happy and quiet years, according to his poetical wish, and after Sir Thomas's death removed with Lady Abney, in 1735, to Stoke Newington, where he remained till he died on the 25th of November 1748. He continued to the end of his life to act as pastor to his congregation. "In the pulpit," says Johnson, "though his low stature, which very little exceeded five feet, graced him with no advantages of appearance, yet the gravity and propriety of his utterance made his discourses very efficacious. I once mentioned the reputation which Mr. Foster had gained, by his proper delivery, to my friend Dr. Hawkesworth, who told me that in the art of pronunciation he was far inferior to Dr. Watts."[1]

[1] Johnson's *Life of Watts*.

It is instructive to compare the Preface to Watt's *Horæ Lyricæ*, published in 1706, with Giles Fletcher's Preface to his *Christ's Death and Victory*, published in 1610.[1] We have seen that all through James I.'s reign there was a strong tendency to choose religious subjects for poetical treatment. Fletcher merely notices the omission of his poetical predecessors to occupy the field of sacred song, and, as I observed in examining his style, his own poem is chiefly remarkable as one of the earliest examples in the school of Theological "Wit." But a hundred years later Watts has to apologise for writing at all on the subject of religion. His Preface is a vehement protest against the immoral poetry of his day. "This profanation and debasement of so divine an art," says he, "has tempted some weaker Christians to imagine that poetry and vice are naturally akin." In opposition to this opinion he gives instances of poetical passages in the Bible (quoting also Longinus' reference to "Let there be Light"), and shows by examples the superiority of Hebrew over Pagan poetry, as illustrating the Divine Nature. He attacks Boileau's aphorism:—

> De la foi d'un Chrétien les mystères terribles
> D'ornemens égayés ne sont pas susceptibles;

and confutes it by pointing to the choice of Christian subjects by Corneille and Racine, Cowley and Blackmore. Continuing his argument, he dwells on the poetical fertility of Christian themes, in a passage which deserves to be compared with Giles Fletcher's summary of the subject matter in *Christ's Death and Victory*:—

> The affairs of this life, with a reference to a life to come, would shine bright in a dramatic description; nor is there any need of any reason why we should always borrow the plan or history from the ancient Jews or primitive martyrs; though several of these would furnish out noble materials for this sort of poesy: but modern scenes would be better understood by most readers, and the application would be much more easy. The anguish of inward guilt, the secret stings, and racks, and scourges of Conscience; the sweet retiring hours and seraphical joys of

[1] Vol. iii. p 119.

devotion; the victory of a resolved soul over a thousand temptations, the inimitable love and passion of a dying God; the awful glories of the last tribunal; the grand decisive sentence from which there is no appeal; and the consequent transports or horrors of the two eternal worlds; these things may be variously disposed and form many poems.

The *Horæ Lyricæ* are divided into three books containing: (1) Poems Sacred to Devotion and Piety; (2) Poems Sacred to Honour, Virtue, and Friendship; (3) Poems Sacred to the Memory of the Dead. Of these the first book is the most characteristic, and perhaps the leading feature in it is the resolute determination of the poet to exclude from his thoughts all but religious themes: we everywhere breathe the atmosphere of the Nonconformist congregation, secluded from the press and clamour of the world. As Watts says in *The Atheist's Mistake*:—

> Hence, ye profane, I hate your ways;
> I walk with pious souls;
> There's a wide difference in our race,
> And distant are our goals.

We find, however, in *Horæ Lyricæ* none of the Pharisaism which usually accompanies a religious attitude of this kind, nor, on the other hand, any of the vulgar familiarity of tone often noticeable in those who monopolise an intercourse with Heaven. The "pious souls" whom Watts addresses are men and women of refinement; and his devotional enthusiasm is reverent and self-restrained. Many of the subjects he treats are of an abstract nature—"Divine Judgments," "Felicity Above," "God's Dominion and Decrees," "The Creator and Creatures," "God's Absolute Dominion," "The Incomprehensible," etc.—materials which he sometimes casts into a Latin mould, sometimes into English odes, imitated from the Latin of Casimir Sarbiewski. It is only when he treats of the Doctrine of Atonement, or of Repentance for Sin, that he allows himself anything like an unchecked flow of emotion. He evidently recognised the distinction between religious Odes and Hymns, for he says:—

In the first book are many Odes, which were written to assist the meditation and worship of vulgar Christians, and with a design to be published in the volume of Hymns which have now passed a second impression; but upon the review I found some expressions which were not suited to the plainest capacity, and the metaphors are too bold to please the weaker Christians: therefore I have allotted them a place here.

In these last words he perhaps alluded to the subject of Divine Love, of which he says:—

Among the songs that are dedicated to divine love, I think I may be bold to assert that I never composed one line of them with any other design than what they are applied to here; and I have endeavoured to secure them all from being perverted and debased to wanton passions, by several lines in them that can never be applied to a meaner love.

In Watts' age the allegorical interpretation of "Solomon's Song" was an accepted principle in theology, nor was there any offence to general taste in applying its amorous imagery to the ideal of religious love; yet the poet's right instinct showed him that the aspirations in the following lines—beautiful in themselves—were not suitable for expression in a Hymn:—

FORSAKEN YET HOPING

Happy the hours, the golden days,
When I could call my Jesus mine,
And sit and view His smiling face,
And melt in pleasures all divine.

Near to my heart, within my arms,
He lay, till Sin defiled my breast,
Till broken vows and earthly charms
Tired and provoked my Heavenly Guest.

And now He's gone (O mighty woe!)
[illegible]

[illegible]

Break, break my heart, complain my tongue!
Hither, my friends, your sorrows bring!
Angels, assist my doleful song,
If you have e'er a mourning string!

But ah! your joys are ever high;
Ever His lovely face you see;
While my poor spirits pant and die,
And groan for Thee, my God, for Thee.

Yet let my hope look through my tears,
And spy afar His rolling throne;
His chariot through the cleaving sphere
Shall bring the bright Belovèd down.

Swift as a roe flies o'er the hills,
My Soul springs out to meet Him high:
Then the fair Conqueror turns his wheels,
And climbs the mansions of the sky.

There smiling joy for ever reigns;
No more the turtle leaves the dove:
Farewell to jealousies and pains,
And all the ills of absent love.

Something of the religious emotion of George Herbert, something of the amorous imagination of Crashaw may be noted in these verses; and by such links the devotional poetry of Watts is connected with the theological school of the seventeenth century. But the element of mysticism is modified in the *Hymns*, published in 1707. Here the austere beliefs of the Calvinist congregation had to be satisfied, and, accordingly, though the expression of individual emotion is still strong, Watts lays stress on those points of doctrine which all members of the congregation held in common. The excess of Calvinism in many of his hymns has made such compositions distasteful to modern feelings. As his biographer, Milner, says:—

The theology of his day was of a somewhat different mould to that embraced at the present day by the majority of the dissenting Churches: it had sterner features, and at the same time those which were more timid; it spoke in severer accents to the sinner, and in a more glowing and mystic style to the saint; it delighted too much in presenting to the one elements of gathering wrath, without a shelter from the storm, and in pampering the other with the gay and ardent fancies of impassioned Eastern poetry.[1]

[1] Milner's *Life and Times of Dr. Isaac Watts*, p. 270.

Examples of what is meant by these words may be found in Watts' presentation of the Calvinist doctrine of the reconciliation of God's attributes of Justice and Mercy by the Atonement of Christ:—

> Once 'twas a seat of dreadful wrath,
> And shot devouring flame;
> Our God appeared consuming fire,
> And vengeance was His name.
>
> Rich were the drops of Jesus' blood,
> That calmed His frowning face,
> That sprinkled o'er the burning throne,
> And turned the wrath to grace [1]

On the other hand the intense gratitude of the individual for Salvation, when admitted by the free choice of God into the company of the elect, is expressed as follows:—

> Pause, my soul, adore and wonder:
> Ask, "O why such love to *me?*"
> Grace hath put me in the number
> Of the Saviour's family.
> Hallelujah!
> Thanks, eternal thanks, to Thee.

Such emotions, common, no doubt, to members of the instructed congregations which preserved the hereditary scholastic principles of Calvin, were by no means shared by all who sought to satisfy their religious instincts with the Christian faith: yet, as Watts said, hymns were plainly designed for use in the "worship of vulgar Christians." Hence a natural tendency drove devotional poets to make the sentiment of their hymns as wide and undogmatic as possible; and, when the large number of Watts' hymns still in use among all English-speaking Christian congregations is considered, his artistic success appears very remarkable. The gradual extension of this religious movement is illustrated by the letter from Doddridge to Watts of May 1731:—

On Wednesday last I was preaching in a barn to a pretty large assembly of plain country people at a village a few miles off.

[1] Watts, *Psalms and Hymns* (Rippon), Book ii. hymn 108

After a sermon from Hebrews vi. 12, we sang one of your hymns, which, if I remember right, was the 140th in the second book ("Give me the wings of faith to rise"), and in that part of the worship I had the satisfaction to observe tears in the eyes of several of the auditory; and after the service was over several of them told me that they were not able to sing, so deeply were their minds affected by it; and the clerk in particular told me that he could hardly utter the words of it. These were most of them poor people who work for their living. I found that your hymns and psalms were almost their daily entertainment.[1]

It was fortunate for Watts that his natural inclination to solitary reverie was checked by the public duties imposed on him by his pastoral office; it was still more fortunate for the character of English hymnology that the popular impulses in religion, which prevailed through the eighteenth century, were directed and controlled by men whose taste had been formed by the study of classical models. In *Horæ Lyricæ* the style is somewhat too consciously literary.

It is my opinion (says Watts, in his Preface,) that the free and unconfined numbers of Pindar, or the noble measures of Milton without rhyme, would best maintain the dignity of the theme, as well as give a loose to the devout soul, nor check the raptures of her faith and love.

But it is not in his so-called Pindaric odes, or in his meditations in blank verse, that Watts contrives to touch the heart. His real artistic successes are attained when he is obliged to express for the use of a simple congregation a universal feeling, within the limits of some common national metre. His efforts are very unequal, and in respect of correct versification, especially in regard to accuracy of rhyming, his hymns leave much to be desired; the ungainliness of the doctrine is often reflected in the verse. But in such compositions as "Our God, our help in ages past"; "When I survey the wondrous cross"; "There is a land of pure delight"; and many others, the style of English hymnology reaches its highest level. The complete absence of affectation; the manly strength and

[1] Milner's *Life and Times of Dr. Isaac Watts*, p. 493.

simplicity of the thought; the purity of the diction, in which every word is rightly chosen, and not one is superfluous; are all marks of correct classical taste.

Apart from Nonconformist theology, the exclusive Whig policy embodied in the Test Act, supported as it was by the dominant "Low" section of the Church of England, may be set down as indirectly one of the prime causes of the great development of Hymnody in the eighteenth century; since by it the interests and aspirations of a large body of the people were withdrawn from politics and concentrated solely on religion. But the same policy produced yet wider results by turning the tide of religious emotion into a new channel within the borders of the Church of England itself. Most of the extreme High-Churchmen were also extreme Tories, who, being unable to take the Oath of Allegiance, either in the reign of William and Mary or under George I., were cut off from participation in the active work of society, and naturally turned their thoughts to the cultivation of inward and spiritual religion. From the study of the mystical divinity of the Nonjurors sprang, quite in the order of consequence, the Methodist movement. The Wesleys carried on the practice of congregational hymn-singing on the lines that Watts had begun; but they gave it a vast extension. Watts was an hereditary Nonconformist; John and Charles Wesley remained to the end of their lives members of the Church of England. They did not, however, limit their action by the local boundaries of congregation or parish; nor was their preaching intended to illustrate any form of scholastic theology. Their object was to awaken a sense of personal religion in any who would associate themselves with the discipline of the "people called Methodists." They would never, in their field-meetings, have said with Watts, "Hence, ye profane!" All were invited to listen:—

There is no other religious society under heaven (writes John Wesley), which requires nothing of men in order to their admission into it, but a desire to save their souls. Look all around you;

you cannot be admitted into the Church, or Society, of the Presbyterians, Anabaptists, Quakers, or any others, unless you hold the same opinion, and adhere to the same mode of worship. The Methodists alone do not insist on your holding this or that opinion; but they think, and let think. Neither do they impose any particular mode of worship; but you may continue to worship in your former manner, be it what it may. Now I do not know any other religious society, either ancient or modern, wherein such liberty of conscience is now allowed, or has been allowed since the days of the Apostles. Here is our glorying, and a glorying peculiar to us. What Society shares it with us?[1]

A mode of religion thus completely internalised necessarily found for itself a lyrical form of expression. Charles Wesley was the poet of the movement; but his thoughts and sentiments were so closely identified with those of his brother John, that the two must be considered as joint-authors of the Methodist hymnology.

Both, as the sons of Samuel Wesley, Rector of Epworth, in Lincolnshire, and Susanna Annesley, his wife, were, by father and mother, of gentle blood. John was born on the 17th of June 1703, and was educated first at Charterhouse, and afterwards at Christ Church, Oxford, from which he took his B.A. degree in 1725 and became M.A. in 1727. On 17th March 1726 he was elected Fellow of Lincoln College, and remained (with some breaks) at Oxford till 1735, in which year he went as a "missioner" among the Indians in Georgia. Charles, who was born on 18th December 1707, was educated at Westminster, from which school he was elected student of Christ Church, and graduated as B.A. in 1729 and M.A. in 1733. He it was who, with some of his undergraduate friends, was first called "Methodist," "because of their strict conformity to the method of study prescribed by the statutes of the University," which led them to the disciplined practice of religious exercises. He accompanied his brother to Georgia in 1735. John Wesley, on his return to England, in 1738 fell completely under the influence of the Moravians, which had begun to work upon him while he was in America; and in the same year

[1] *John Wesley*, by J. H. Overton, p. 211.

he associated himself with George Whitefield, who had already commenced the Evangelical Revival. From this date onwards, for more than fifty years, his life was mainly occupied with itinerant preaching, and with establishing Societies of Methodists in different parts of the country. He died on the 2nd of March 1791. Charles, who for a long time accompanied his brother on his various journeys, died on the 29th of March 1788. Their religious poems are mainly contained in a great number of Hymn-Books, of which the following are the most important: *Hymn-Book* published at Charlestown in America, 1737; *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, by John and Charles Wesley, 1739; *Hymn-Book*, 1740 (containing hymns on Christian Perfection); *A Collection of Moral and Sacred Poems*, dedicated to Lady Huntingdon, 1744; *Hymns on the Lord's Supper*, by John and Charles Wesley, 1745.

The inward spiritual development of the Wesleys that led them to itinerant preaching is complex and curious, but as it has a strong bearing on the general movement of the national imagination, it is worth while attempting to follow its windings. As far as I understand it, the brothers during their period of Oxford self-discipline were unqualified Arminians. John Wesley in 1777 said that the books by which he was then most influenced were Thomas à Kempis' *Imitatio Christi*, and Jeremy Taylor's *Rules of Holy Living and Dying*. It is certain also that he was immensely impressed by the teaching of the celebrated William Law's *Christian Perfection*. Now Law's fundamental idea of Christianity was this:—

It (Revelation) teaches us that the world in which we live is also in a disordered irregular state, and cursed for the sake of man; that it is no longer the paradise that God made it, but the *remains of a drowned world, full of marks of God's displeasure*, and the sin of its inhabitants.

That it is a mere wilderness, a state of darkness, a vale of misery, where vice and madness, dreams and shadows, variously please, agitate, and torment the short miserable lives of men.

. . . . . .

This is the true point of view in which every Christian is to behold himself. He is to overlook the poor projects of human

life, and to consider himself as a creature, through his natural corruption, falling into a state of endless misery, but by the mercy of God redeemed to a condition of everlasting felicity.[1]

Hence it is his duty, turning himself away from the world, to strive with perpetual endeavours, after the state of Christian Perfection, which is to be sought by constant self-denial, prayer, and devotion.

By these principles the Wesleys guided their conduct while at Oxford. But on his return from America, John seems to have been entirely dominated by a Moravian, one Peter Böhler, who showed him the meaning of the doctrine of Justification by Faith. This was very intimately associated with the Calvinistic doctrine of Election: at any rate it required, as the latter does, the verification of faith by an *inward assurance* of Salvation. John Wesley astonished his friends and relatives by declaring that up to that time he had not been a Christian, while Charles, who seems to have arrived independently at the same conviction, gave, in a kind of poetical autobiography, called "The Just shall live by Faith," his view of his religious state while at Oxford :—

For ten long legal years I lay,
A helpless, though reluctant, prey
  To pride, and lust, and earth, and hell:
Oft to repentance vain renewed,
Self-confident for hours I stood,
  And fell and grieved, and rose and fell.

. . . . .

Hardly at last I all gave o'er;
I sought to free myself no more,
  Too weak to burst the fowler's snare;
Baffled by twice ten thousand foils,
I ceased to struggle in the toils,
  And yielded to a just despair.

'Twas then my soul beheld from far
The glimmering of an orient star,
  That pierced and cheered my nature's night:
Sweetly it dawned and promised day,
Sorrow and sin it chased away,
  And opened into glorious light.

[1] Law's *Christian Perfection*.

With other eyes I now could see
The Father, reconciled to me,
Jesus, the Just, had satisfied;
Jesus had made my sufferings His;
Jesus was now my righteousness;
Jesus for *me* had lived and died.

These verses appear in *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, by John Wesley and Charles Wesley (2nd series), published in 1740. In a hymn-book with the same title, published in 1739, the authors say in a preface:—

Some verses, it may be observed, in the following collection were wrote upon the scheme of the mystic divines. And these, it is owned, we once had in great veneration, as the best explained of the Gospel of Christ. But we are now convinced that we therein greatly erred, not knowing the Scriptures neither the power of God.

It appears therefore that the point on which the Wesleys parted from William Law was the interpretation of the doctrine of Justification by Faith, and the inward assurance of Conversion. On the other hand, the nature of the doctrine which the brothers held while at Oxford may be gathered from a pamphlet by William Law, published in 1760, entitled *Of Justification by Faith and Works: A Dialogue between a Methodist and a Churchman*, in which the following passage occurs:—

What is the Redemption through Jesus Christ but a Redemption by and through all that which Christ as God-Man was, did, suffered, obtained, taught, and commanded, that is, through and by the whole of the Gospel Religion? How is Christ our Propitiation or Peace but by that which He is and does in the inward change and renewal of our nature in bringing forth a new creature, not born of man, nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God? What is Faith in His Blood but the same thing as Faith in His Cross, and what is faith in either case but a hearty willingness and full desire wholly to cease and turn away from all Heathenish or Jewish works, and to embrace and give ourselves to all that is meant, taught, and required, by the Gospel Faith or Kingdom of God?

The Wesleys, in fact, became in 1738 Calvinists in respect of the doctrine of the Atonement and the necessity

of an inwardly experienced conversion; but they remained Arminian with regard to the operation of Grace. Their Hymn Book of 1740 contained the celebrated hymn by Charles Wesley on "Free Grace," which caused the breach in their alliance with Whitefield. In this the poet said:—

O! if Thy spirit send forth me,
  The meanest of the throng,
I'll sing Thy grace divinely free,
  And teach mankind Thy song.

Grace will I sing through Jesus' name,
  On all mankind bestowed;
The everlasting truth proclaim,
  And seal that truth with blood.

This was of course to repudiate the Calvinist doctrine of Election, and Whitefield at once wrote to John Wesley:—

Instead of pawning your salvation as you have done in a late Hymn Book, if the doctrine of Universal Redemption be not true; instead of talking of sinless Perfection, as you have done in the preface to that Hymn Book, and making man's salvation depend upon his own free-will, as you have done in this sermon; you will compose a hymn in praise of sovereign distinguishing love. You will caution believers against striving to work a perfection out of their own hearts, and print another sermon the reverse of this, and entitle it *Free Grace*, indeed—*free* not because *free to all*, but free because God may withhold or give it to whom and when He pleases.

Whatever subtleties of distinction may have divided the creed of the Calvinist from that of the Arminian missioners, it seems certain that only by the strength of a personal conviction of what was called in the eighteenth century "experimental religion" being necessary to salvation could either section have produced the extraordinary effects that attended their field-preaching. The doctrine of "Christian Perfection" was suitable to the development of such Quietism as prevailed in the little religious establishment at King's Cliff, presided over by William Law, but it would have been without meaning

to the unlettered multitudes who listened breathlessly to the sermons of Whitefield and John Wesley. Inward feeling is also the secret of Charles Wesley's wonderful fertility as a hymn-writer. Of the 770 hymns contained in the Wesleyan Methodist Hymn Book, 627 are of his composition; and he is said to have written in all more than 6000 hymns. These are adapted to almost every situation in social life; they express nearly every shade of religious feeling; and it is astonishing what a high level of excellence most of them attain. John Wesley (who was himself mainly a translator) was fully justified in writing before the *Collection of Hymns for the use of the People called Methodists*, published in 1780:—

> In these hymns there is no doggerel, no blotches, nothing put in to patch up the rhyme, no feeble expletives—nothing turgid or bombastic on the one hand, or low and creeping on the other—no cant expressions, no words without meaning. Here are, allow me to say, both the purity, the strength, and the elegance, of the English language, and at the same time the utmost simplicity and plainness, suited to every capacity.

The fact is that the simple fervour of Charles Wesley's religious feelings was always chastened and controlled in the expression by the masculine taste of the scholar and the gentleman, a combination of impulse and judgment which makes him the most admirable *devotional* lyric poet in the English language. It is impossible to read his best verses without recognising their artistic inspiration, one of the finest examples of which is his poem called "Wrestling Jacob":—

Come, O thou Traveller unknown,
Whom still I hold, but cannot see;
My company before is gone,
And I am left alone with Thee.
With Thee all night I mean to stay
And wrestle till the break of day.

I need not tell Thee whom I am,
My misery or sin declare:
Thyself hast called me by my name;
Look on Thy hands and read it there.
But who, I ask Thee, who art Thou?
Tell me Thy name, and tell me now.

In vain Thou strugglest to get free;
  I never will unloose my hold.
Art Thou the Man that died for me?
  The secret of Thy Love unfold.
Wrestling I will not let Thee go,
Till I Thy Name, Thy Nature know.

Wilt Thou not yet to me reveal
  Thy new unutterable Name?
Tell me, I beseech Thee, tell!
  To know it now resolved I am.
Wrestling I will not let Thee go,
Till I Thy name, Thy Nature know

'Tis all in vain to hold Thy tongue,
  Or touch the hollow of my thigh:
Though every sinew were unstrung,
  Out of my arms Thou shouldst not fly.
Wrestling I will not let Thee go,
Till I Thy Name, Thy Nature know.

What though my shrinking flesh complain,
  And murmur to contend so long?
I rise superior to my pain;
  When I am weak then I am strong;
And when my all of strength doth fail,
I shall with the God-Man prevail.

My strength is gone, my Nature dies,
  I sink beneath Thy weighty Hand;
Faint to revive, and fall to rise;
  I fall, and yet by Faith I stand.
I stand, and will not let Thee go,
Till I Thy Name, Thy Nature know.

To Charles Wesley's keen feeling for artistic proportion was also added a genial sense of humour, which manifests itself in the volume containing his *Hymns written in the Time of the Tumult*—viz., the Lord George Gordon Riots of 1780. This includes a satire on the cowardly conduct of the Magistrates on that occasion, in the course of which the poet hits off, with much dramatic spirit, the disposition of the mob towards the various victims of their violence. Among others, they are made to declaim against the Methodists and their leaders :—

Old Wesley too, to Papists kind,
Who wrote against them for a blind,
Himself a Papist still in heart,
He and his followers shall smart.
Not one of his fraternity,
We here beneath our standard see.

The Wesleys were indeed thoroughly loyal to Church and King, and their strong practical sense kept them, amid all their religious enthusiasm, in touch with the onward political course of the nation as a whole. Their Arminianism also helped to temper the democratic movement they headed with the disciplinary observances inherited from their Oxford days. But the spiritual excitement which they had set in motion was by no means confined to rude wayside congregations; it penetrated the recesses of polite society, and transformed the lives of men of genius and learning.

Whether poor Christopher Smart (1722-1770), an excellent classical scholar, Fellow of Pembroke College, Cambridge, whose writings generally aim at catching the witty satiric tone of the period, was ever touched by the Methodist preaching, we know not. There can, however, be no doubt that his *Song to David* owes much of its fine lyrical quality to the religious atmosphere of the movement. Written when the author was in confinement, this poem is constructed on lines at once sane and magnificent, and its diction exhibits the same masculine directness as Charles Wesley's *Wrestling Jacob*:—

There is but One who ne'er rebelled,
But One by passion unimpelled,
  By pleasures unenticed;
He from Himself hath semblance sent,
Grand object of His own content,
  And saw the God in Christ.

Tell them I AM, Jehovah said
To Moses; while earth heard in dread,
  And, smitten to the heart,
At once above, beneath, around,
All Nature, without voice or sound,
  Replied, "O Lord, THOU ART."

But Methodism, or at least Calvinism, can claim as its convert a more famous poet than Smart. Except in respect of their birth, their classical education, and the intensity of their inward spiritual convictions, there could be no greater contrast than between the characters of the Wesleys, on the one hand, and that of the unfortunate Cowper, on the other. Methodism impelled the Wesleys

To fly, like Oglethorpe, from pole to pole.

They travelled over many thousands of miles in their missionary efforts: they were for ever addressing multitudes: they became great rulers and organisers of society. Calvinism turned Cowper from a comparatively cheerful scholar into a shrinking and sensitive recluse, and aggravated his propensity to introspection into religious mania. He was by family allied to the governing classes of the country: by temperament (as his *Translations from the French of Madame Guyon* show) he was inclined to the school of religious Quietism, represented by William Law: by taste and education his mind was keenly alive to all the soothing charms of art and literature. But all the forces of birth, art, and refinement, were insufficient to preserve a mind morbid in its tendencies from the horrors haunting it through a belief in the revolting Calvinist doctrine of Reprobation. It is of course foreign to the scope of this History to dwell upon the more purely personal side of the Lives of the English Poets. I shall therefore deal rapidly with the details of Cowper's biography—which indeed are well known to all lovers of English literature—and shall devote myself mainly to considering the effect produced by his peculiar religious opinions on his art, and the influence which this exercised on the general course of our poetry.

William Cowper was the second of the three sons of the Rev. John Cowper, Rector of Great Berkhampstead, and of Ann Donne his wife, who was of the same family as John Donne the poet. He was born on 26th November 1731, and, when only six years old had the misfortune to lose his mother, whose memory he has immortalised in

the pathetic elegy *On the Receipt of my Mother's Picture.* About a year afterwards he was sent to school with a Dr. Pitman at Markgate Street, where he spent two unhappy years, being removed at the end of them to the care of an oculist in consequence of inflammation of the eyes. At ten years of age he went to Westminister, at which school, it would appear, from his *Tirocinium*, time passed with him pleasantly enough. Among his schoolfellows were Warren Hastings, George Colman, George Cumberland, Robert Lloyd, and Charles Churchill. He left school in 1748, and after spending three years at home was articled to a solicitor, with whom he studied law for three years, having for a companion the future Lord Thurlow. During this time he visited often at the house of his uncle, Ashley Cowper, Clerk of the Parliments, and fell deeply in love with his cousin Theodora; but her father, observing in him the symptoms of melancholia, refused to allow their engagement. Having entered the Middle Temple, he lost his father in 1756, and, being somewhat hard pressed for money, was made through family influence Commissioner of Bankrupts, a place worth £60 a year. For some time he seems to have added to his resources by contributing to *The Connoisseur*, a magazine which had been started by two old Westminister boys, Thornton and Colman.

In 1763 his cousin, Major Cowper, appointed him to two almost sinecure places in the House of Lords; but his morbid conscience reproached him with having desired the death of the previous holder of one of them, and he begged that it might be given to a friend. With regard to the other, he was told that he must show evidence of his qualifications; and the apprehension of this so preyed upon his mind that he attempted to commit suicide. On awaking to consciousness of the nature of his action, he imagined that he was condemned to eternal perdition. His cousin, Martin Madan, chaplain of the Lock Hospital, attempted to give him consolation, by pointing out to him the means of Justification through the Blood of Christ, but as Madan, according to the Calvinist

creed, insisted on the necessity of an inward assurance of Salvation, Cowper's agony increased, and it became necessary to place him in a lunatic asylum at St. Albans, under the care of Dr. Nathaniel Cotton. Here, after he had been gradually restored to sanity, he stayed for more than a year; and then, having resigned his Commissionership, took up his abode, aided by an allowance from his friends, at Huntingdon.

In this town he made the acquaintance of the Unwins, and lived in their house till the death of Mr. Unwin in 1767. Thereupon he removed with Mrs. Unwin to Olney, by an arrangement with John Newton, who had for three years been curate of that parish. With him Cowper formed a strong friendship, and took a prominent part in the movement of religious revival which Newton had originated in the town. At the suggestion of his friend he also consented in 1771 to aid in the production of a volume of Hymns. But the atmosphere of spiritual excitement which he now breathed soon produced its natural effects: in 1773 his old malady returned, and he again vainly attempted suicide. Recovering his senses slowly, he occupied himself with gardening; but Newton, who took care of him in his own house during his illness, says that it was sixteen months before he began to smile. For more than three years he entirely dropped the letter writing in which he delighted; in 1776, however, he began to resume his literary composition, and when Newton left Olney in 1779, their joint work, the *Olney Hymns*, was ready for publication.

After this Cowper employed himself more regularly in writing. The years 1780-84 were probably the happiest in his life since the first attack of his malady. At the suggestion of Mrs. Unwin, he composed rapidly the poems contained in the volume published in 1782—viz. *Table Talk*, *The Progress of Error*, *Truth*, *Expostulation*, *Hope*, *Charity*, *Conversation*, *Retirement*, and a few lyrics. In 1781 he made the acquaintance of Lady Austen, who suggested to him the idea of *The Task*. She also told him the story which he put into verse

as *The Diverting History of John Gilpin*. *The Task*, together with *Tirocinium* (composed in 1784) and *John Gilpin*, was published in 1785, and the poet was gratified by the rapid success of the volume. But his happiness was of short duration. Consideration for the feelings of Mrs. Unwin obliged him in 1784 to break off the connection with Lady Austen, and he says that, when writing *The Task*, he "was often supremely unhappy." In another letter he writes, "You will think me mad, but I am not mad, most noble Festus, I am only in despair." He now employed himself on his translation of Homer, and the void caused in his life by the loss of Lady Austen was partially filled by the renewal of intimacy with his cousin Lady Hesketh and by the companionship of some fresh friends, the Throckmortons.

In 1787, however, his fit returned, and he once more attempted to destroy himself. After a short interval he became himself again. His translation of Homer was published in 1791; and he afterwards undertook to edit the works of Milton. But an attack of paralysis with which Mrs. Unwin was seized in that year aggravated his mental malady, and her death in 1795 completed his sense of despair. The only thing that afforded him even temporary relief was the revision of his translation of Homer. In this state he lingered on till his release by death on the 1st of February 1800; the last of his original compositions was his very fine poem *The Castaway*, written on the 20th of March 1799.

Cowper began to write at a period marked by the absence in society of all active motives of inspiration, and at the same time by a widespread taste for literature. His literary gift was early developed, and, like that of Cowley and other poets, showed itself in a remarkable facility of imitation. His earliest verses are an imitation of John Philips' *Splendid Shilling*; in his *Epistle to Robert Lloyd* he shows himself an admirer of "dear Mat Prior's easy jingle"; and though his love poems have the ring of sincerity, they are chiefly noticeable for the conventional

smoothness of their versification. He wrote now and then in the monthly magazines in a manner adapted to the formal taste of "the town," but in his early work his literary feeling is still without character; the man himself does not appear in his poetry till after he had taken up his abode at Olney. From that date onwards his Calvinism expresses itself in one of two forms, either lyrical or didactic and satiric.

He was nearly fifty years old when the *Olney Hymns* appeared, and in these it is at once seen that the artistic power manifested in his earliest work has at last obtained substantial materials with which to deal, and has found out the way to mould them into the right form. The hymns composed by Cowper express various moods of religious emotion; and it is high proof of manliness and self-control, that in none of them does he seek to give utterance to the feelings of despair of which he was the unhappy victim. The extreme Calvinistic doctrine of the Atonement is of course everywhere prominent, and imparts to almost all the hymns an intensely personal character, so that perhaps the number of those which—like "Oh for a closer walk with God!" "God moves in a mysterious way"; and, "Hark, my soul, it is the Lord"—are fitted for congregational singing, is small. But few of them are disfigured by the cant phrases of the sect;[1] while, as in Charles Wesley's hymns, the prevailing characteristic is, that sure sign of genuine poetry, the power of expressing a forcible feeling with intense simplicity. In the following verses the lyrical emotion gives to the words all the sincerity of autobiography:—

[1] In the following we find something like the pharisaical self-consciousness of the Elect:

> The Lord receives His highest praise
> From humble minds and hearts sincere;
> While all the loud professor says
> Offends the righteous Judge's ear.

and

> Too many, Lord, abuse Thy grace
> In this licentious day.
> And while they boast they see Thy face,
> They turn their own away.

MY SOUL THIRSTETH FOR GOD

I thirst but not as once I did,
   The vain delights of earth to share;
Thy wounds, Emmanuel, all forbid
   That I should seek my pleasures there.

It was the sight of Thy dear cross
   First weaned my soul from earthly things
And taught me to esteem as dross
   The mirth of fools and pomp of kings.

I want that grace that springs from Thee,
   That quickens all things when it flows,
And makes a wretched thorn like me
   Bloom as the myrtle and the rose.

Dear fountain of delight unknown,
   No longer sink below the brim;
But overflow, and pour me down
   A living and life-giving stream.

For sure of all the plants that share
   The notice of my Father's eye,
None proves less grateful to his care,
   Or yields him meaner fruit than I.

And who does not feel the pathetic intensity of this?

THE CONTRITE HEART

The Lord will happiness divine
   On contrite hearts bestow;
Then tell me, gracious God, is mine
   A contrite heart or no?

I hear, but seem to hear in vain,
   Insensible as steel.
If aught is felt, 'tis only pain
   To find I cannot feel.

I sometimes think myself inclined
   To love Thee if I could;
But often feel another mind
   Averse to all that's good.

My best desires are faint and few,
   I fain would strive for more;
But when I cry, "My strength renew!"
   Seem weaker than before.

Thy saints are comforted I know,
And love Thy house of prayer;
I therefore go when others go,
But find no comfort there.

Oh make this heart rejoice or ache;
Decide this doubt for me;
And if it be not broken, break,—
And heal it if it be.

The case is different with the volume of "Poems" published in 1782. In this Cowper endeavours didactically to combine with his Calvinist doctrine the vivacious air of familiar conversation which characterises the satire of the earlier part of the century. But his effort is unsuccessful. Neither nature nor art had qualified him for a satirist. His gentle and affectionate heart rendered him incapable of the fierce invective of Juvenal; his shyness and introspective habits, of the worldly wisdom of Horace. In satire, vice and folly must be judged by the universal standard of Reason; but Cowper refers all his judgments to the sectional Calvinist doctrine of Grace. What he calls satires are therefore, in reality, like those of Wither, long, sermon-like soliloquies, which lack the due sense of proportion. For example, in *The Progress of Error*, the first of the series he undertook at Mrs. Unwin's suggestion, he starts with the undoubtedly just, though not very original, observation, that Man is placed in the world on his trial, and that

Hourly allurements on his passions press,
Safe in themselves but dangerous in the excess.

But having thus stated his theme, the only examples of it that he provides are the hunting parson; the clergyman who indulges himself with music on Sunday evenings; card-playing on Sundays; the drunken Clodio, and Rufillus who "has the Ladies' Etiquette by heart"; the sentimental novelist; Lord Chesterfield; and the typical travelling tutor and pupil. From these he rambles off to the presumption of rationalising critics of Scripture concluding finally:—

But Muse, forbear! long flights forbode a fall;
Strike on the deep-toned chord the sum of all.
Hear the just law the judgment of the skies;
He that hates truth shall be the dupe of lies;
And he that *will* be cheated to the last,
Delusions strong as hell shall bind him fast.
But if the wanderer his mistake discern,
Judge his own ways, and sigh for a return,
Bewildered once, must he bewail his loss
For ever and for ever? No—the Cross!
There and there only (though the deist rave
And atheist, if earth bear so mean a slave),
There and there only is the power to save;
There no delusive hope invites despair,
No mockery meets you, no deception there:
The spells and charms that blinded you before
All vanish there, and fascinate no more.

This seems to be a somewhat inadequate treatment of so wide a theme as *The Progress of Error.*

In the same way *Expostulation* is supposed to be the pleading of the poet with his country to repent of her national sins. The history of Israel is dwelt on at great length for the warning of England. But when the reader expects a satiric answer to the question

What appears
In England's case to move the Muse to tears?

almost the only sins that are enumerated are the national failure to ascribe to Heaven the glory for victory; the fortune-hunting of the East India Company's servants; the abuses of the Test Act; and the worldliness of the clergy, of whom the poet says:

Except a few with Eli's spirit blest,
Hophni and Phineas may describe the rest.

Nor is the spiritual Pharisaism of the satires redeemed by any great excellences of style. The diction, with its over-homely imagery and slang phrases of "smart society," is indeed familiar, but also (what Cowper never is when happily inspired) somewhat vulgar, as in passages like the following:—

Hence Liberty, sweet Liberty, inspires,
And keeps alive his fierce but noble fires.
Patient of constitutional control,
He bears it with meek manliness of soul;
But if authority grow wanton, woe
To him that *treads upon his free-born toe!*

or

He wore them as fine trappings for a show,
A praying, synagogue-frequenting *beau*.

The versification is distinguished from prose-writing only by the rhyme. It has neither the masculine force of Dryden nor the epigrammatic terseness of Pope. It aims at the light touch of Young in his *Universal Passion*, but wants his wit; it succeeds in imitating the fluent periods of Churchill, but not the brutal conclusiveness with which that able literary bravo often brings his paragraphs to a climax. Here is a characteristic example:—

Build by whatever plan caprice decrees,
With what materials on what ground you please:
Your hope shall stand unblamed, perhaps admired,
If not that hope the Scripture has required.
The strange conceits, vain projects, and wild dreams,
With which hypocrisy for ever teems,
(Though other follies strike the public eye
And raise a laugh) pass unmolested by:
But if unblamable in word and thought,
A *man* arise, a man whom God has taught,
With all Elijah's dignity of tone,
And all the love of the beloved John,
To storm the citadels they build in air,
And smite the untempered wall 'tis death to spare;
To sweep away all refuges of lies,
And place, instead of quirks themselves devise,
Lama Sabachthani before their eyes;
To prove that without Christ all gain is loss,
All hope despair that stands not on His cross;
Except the few his God may have impressed,
A tenfold frenzy seizes all the rest.

On the other hand, in *The Task*, Cowper has lighted on the subject fitted to his genius; he has also invented the form in which it ought to be treated. The supposed theme (which is indeed no theme) becomes in his hands capable of an essentially lyrical form of presentation, and

all the solitary and centrifugal tendencies in the man find a channel of expression in which they can flow without being impeded by the sins of unregenerate society. Calvinism, it is true, still permeates his thought, but this is brought into such complete subjection to the requirements of artistic form as not to clash with the poet's delight in external nature, or with the well-bred gaiety and ease that characterise all his descriptions of himself and his surroundings. He perceived (without perhaps perceiving all the reasons for it) that satire was not his proper instrument:—

> Since pulpits fail, and sounding-boards reflect
> Most part an empty ineffectual sound,
> What chance that I, to fame so little known,
> Nor conversant with men or manners much,
> Should speak to purpose, or with bitter hope
> Crack the satiric thong? 'Twere wiser far
> For me, enamoured of sequestered scenes,
> And charmed with rural beauty, to repose
> Where chance may throw me, beneath elm or vine,
> My languid limbs when summer sears the plains:
> Or, when rough winter rages, on the soft
> And sheltered sofa, while the nitrous air
> Feeds a blue flame, and makes a cheerful hearth;
> There undisturbed by Folly, and apprised
> How great the danger of disturbing lies,
> To muse in silence, or at least confine
> Remarks that gall so many to the few,
> My partners in retreat. Disgust concealed
> Is ofttimes proof of wisdom, when the fault
> Is obstinate, and cure beyond our reach

By adopting the mock-heroic manner of blank-verse with which he had begun his poetical career in his boyish imitation of *The Splendid Shilling*, he found employment for his peculiar vein of humour. He could now at choice describe in grandiose language the familiar objects about him; indulge in sentimental reveries inspired by Rousseau, diverge into passages of autobiography and compliment; or, if he chose, reoccupy the satiric pulpit for which he had so unfortunate a predilection. It will probably be generally felt that the satirical passages of *The Task*, and especially the invectives against the clergy in *The Time-*

piece, are its least agreeable feature; but their harshness is somewhat mellowed in the comparatively playful atmosphere of the general composition.

The Task stands midway between *The Seasons* and *The Excursion.* All three poems are animated by an intense love of Nature; but Cowper's verse combines the external painting of Thomson with something of the introspective analysis of Wordsworth. The middle point in which these qualities meet is the happy egotism of the retiring, but well-bred gentleman, who knows how to talk about himself in such a way as to interest his readers. Cowper's poetic descriptions are as minute as a Dutch picture:—

I am in truth (he said) so unaccountably local in the use of my pen, that, like the man in the fable, who could leap well nowhere but at Rhodes, I seem incapable of writing at all except at Weston.[1]

But, just as is the case with the best Dutch painters, his poetic power made his verbal landscape painting appear *typical.* No poem reflects so clearly as *The Task*, the leisurely, aristocratic, social life of the eighteenth century in England, with its shadow of coming individualism cast before. What Englishman of to-day, though he may have never been in Buckinghamshire, does not see his country in the following lines?

Thence with what pleasure have we just discerned
The distant plough slow moving, and beside
His labouring team, that swerved not from the track,
The sturdy swain diminished to a boy.
Here Ouse, slow winding through a level plain
Of spacious meads with cattle sprinkled o'er,
Conducts the eye along his sinuous course
Delighted. There, fast-rooted in their bank,
Stand, never overlooked, our favourite elms,
That screen the herdsman's solitary hut;
While far beyond, and overthwart the stream,
That, as with molten glass, inlays the vale,
The sloping land recedes into the clouds,
Displaying on its varied side the grace

[1] Southey's *Works of Cowper*, vol. iii. p. 75.

Of hedge-row beauties numberless, square tower,[1]
Tall spire,[2] from which the sound of cheerful bells
Just undulate upon the listening ear;
Groves, heaths, and smoking villages remote.[3]

In the humorous painting of the building of the cucumber frame; in the descriptions of the tame hare, of the postman's horn, of the sound of church-bells across the snow; is embodied a love of the country with all its animal and vegetable life, as strong in the Englishman as in the ancient Roman; a habit ingrained in him by centuries of assimilated feudalism, but softened by sentiments of a philosophic civilisation. And this lyrical concentration of thought and feeling is perfectly reflected in Cowper's style. He excels, perhaps, all English poets in the quality of well-bred simplicity. In his truly representative poems his versification is always easy, but never vacuous; choice, but absolutely devoid of pretentiousness and affectation. In expressing pathetic ideas, without the aid of ornament, he is unequalled. Witness such varied melodies as:—

Weigh the vessel up,
  Once dreaded by our foes,
And mingle with the cup
  The tears that England owes.

Her timbers yet are sound,
  And she may float again
Full charged with England's thunder,
  And plough the distant main.

But Kempenfelt is gone;
  His victories are o'er;
And he and his eight hundred
  Shall plough the wave no more.

and:

Thy needles, once a shining store,
For my sake restless heretofore,
Now rust disused, and shine no more,
  My Mary!

[1] Of Clifton. [2] Of Olney. [3] Emberton and Steventon.

For though thou gladly wouldst fulfil
The same kind office for me still,
Thy sight now seconds not thy will,
My Mary!

But well thou playedst the housewife's part,
And all thy threads with magic art
Have wound themselves about this heart,
My Mary!

and:

The poplars are felled; farewell to the shade,
And the whispering sound of the cool colonnade.
The winds play no longer and sing in the leaves,
Nor Ouse on his bosom their image receives.

. . . . . .

My fugitive years are all hasting away,
And I must ere long lie as lowly as they,
With a turf on my breast, and a stone at my head,
Ere another such grove shall arise in its stead.

'Tis a sight to engage me, if anything can,
To muse on the perishing pleasures of man;
Though his life be a dream, his enjoyments, I see,
Have a being less durable even than he.

and:

I therefore purpose not, or dream,
Descanting on his fate,
To give the melancholy theme
A more enduring date:
But misery still delights to trace
Its semblance in another's case.

No voice divine the storm allayed,
No light propitious shone,
When, snatched from all effectual aid,
We perished, each alone:
But I beneath a rougher sea,
And whelmed in deeper gulf than he.

I have already shown that the classic purity of poetical expression, which was so pre-eminent a quality in Cowper, was also a characteristic of the hymns of Watts and Wesley. From this it may with confidence be inferred that the great undercurrent of religious revival in the eighteenth century, equally devotional and democratic in its tendency, was a powerful factor in bringing about a revolution in English Poetry as well as in English politics

Methodism produced little effect on the governing classes of the country. The dislike with which they regarded it is made apparent by the constant references to it in the letters of Horace Walpole, and even a Churchman so religious as Bishop Butler looked with suspicion on the field-preaching of Wesley, as being tainted with the always dreaded "enthusiasm." Reason, based on experience, was the standard by which refined society judged of all actions; the atmosphere they breathed was entirely political; and, in proportion as the cause of Constitutional Liberty became part of the assets in the social life of the nation, it lost its power as an ideal; so that the poets of the lettered aristocracy, who had once kindled their imagination with the civic spirit of the great writers of Greece and Rome, satisfied themselves more and more with an insipid imitation of classic forms On the other hand, the ideal of Christian Liberty tended to turn the imaginations of those who cherished it away from the sphere of politics into that of religion. This necessarily encouraged a mode of expression severe in its simplicity; but, at the same time, the religious poets of the eighteenth century, being scholars and men of refinement, knew that it was necessary for them to curb their enthusiasm by art, and to observe in their compositions the rules of correct taste. Hence arose in practice a more natural mode of poetic diction, which, as opposed to the artificial style cultivated by the degenerate followers of Pope, furnished a starting-point for Wordsworth, when he elaborated his revolutionary theory of metrical composition.

CHAPTER XII

THE EARLY ROMANTIC MOVEMENT IN ENGLISH POETRY

ALLAN RAMSAY; WILLIAM SOMERVILE; WILLIAM SHENSTONE; GEORGE, LORD LYTTELTON; JOSEPH AND THOMAS WARTON; THOMAS GRAY AND WILLIAM COLLINS; JAMES MACPHERSON; THOMAS CHATTERTON.

IF Sir Robert Walpole was the representative Englishman in the sphere of political action during the first half of the eighteenth century, Horace Walpole, during the latter half, was a not less typical exponent of the taste and imagination of society in the sphere of critical reflection. No two persons could have been, superficially, more unlike each other than father and son. Between the robust, fox-hunting Minister—the country-loving owner of Houghton, himself the type of a country-gentleman, the object of whose policy was, above all things, to reconcile the country-gentlemen of England to the rule of the House of Brunswick—and the delicate, fastidious *petit maître*, half a Frenchman, loving "the Town," hating squires and all their ways; the contrast was so striking that it is little wonder the scandal of Society should have hinted, probably unjustly, that the two were not bound together by a true lineal relationship. The one was the ruler, the other the spoiled child, of his time.

Yet they had certain points in common. Horace inherited and cherished the Whig tradition of his father, distinct as this was from the Whiggism of the great Revolution Houses: he was a Whig in the latitude of his churchmanship and his dislike of religious enthusiasm:

his political creed was a natural development of Whig principle, an aristocratic Republicanism, veiled under the forms of Monarchy. The emphatic difference in the family character of the two generations was, in fact, to a very great extent, the result of external circumstances. In the time of Sir Robert the Whigs were a select body fighting for the establishment of a constitutional principle: the latter half of the eighteenth century saw the constitutional battle won, the political compromise effected, the Hanoverian dynasty firmly established: the little society which had gained the victory was now chiefly concerned with the division of the spoils; and the son of its great leader became the witty and cynical chronicler of its ideas, its tastes, and its amusements.

Horace Walpole's epistolary correspondence illustrates in almost every page the character of the transition:—

> Oh! my dear sir (he writes to John Chute), don't you find that nine parts in ten of the world are of no use but to make you wish yourself with that tenth part? I am so far from growing used to mankind by living amongst them, that my natural ferocity and wildness does but every day grow worse. They tire me, they fatigue me; I don't know what to do with them; I fling open the windows, and fancy I want air; and when I get by myself, I undress myself, and seem to have had people in my pockets, in my plaits, and on my shoulders! I fear 'tis growing old; but I literally seem to have murdered a man whose name was Ennui, for his ghost is ever before me. They say there is no English word for *ennui*; I think you may translate it most literally by what is called "entertaining people" and "doing the honours": that is, you sit an hour with somebody you don't know and don't care for, talk about the wind and the weather, and ask a thousand foolish questions, which all begin with, "I think you live a good deal in the country," or, "I think you don't love this thing or that." Oh! 'tis dreadful![1]

For this malady the cure appeared to lie in the free indulgence of an Epicurean æstheticism:—

> I'll tell you (Horace goes on) what is delightful—the Domenichin! My dear sir, if ever there was a Domenichin, if there was ever an original picture, this is one. I am quite

[1] Letter of August 20, 1743.

happy; for my father is as much transported with it as I am. It is hung in the gallery, where are all his most capital pictures, and he himself thinks it beats all but the two *Guidos*. That of the *Doctors* and the Octagon—I don't know if you ever saw them? What a chain of thought this leads me into! but why should I not indulge it? I will flatter myself with your some time or other passing a few days here with me. Why must I never expect to see anything but Beefs[1] in a gallery which would not yield even to the Colonna?[2]

Alike in his ennui and his æstheticism, the spirit of the aristocratic Whig breathes through Walpole's utterances. He wanted more liberty of imagination, and he was a rebel against Classic Form:—

The Grecian (says he in a letter to Horace Mann) is only proper for magnificent and public buildings. Columns and all their beautiful ornaments look ridiculous when crowded into a closet or a cheese-cake house. The variety is little, and admits no charming irregularities. I am almost as fond of the *Sharawaggi* or Chinese want of symmetry in buildings as in grounds or gardens. I am sure whenever you come to England you will be pleased with the liberty of taste into which we are struck and of which you can have no idea.[3]

Hence he was all for an agreeable licence in Landscape Gardening, and was quite ready to destroy the old formal style of garden to make room for "Kent and Nature." Hence, too, he thought that, in fiction, the right rule was to combine the supernatural "machinery" of the Middle Ages with the modern imitation of Nature, and he exemplified his principles in *The Castle of Otranto*, with a result that is humorously described in a letter of George James Williams to George Selwyn:—

It consists of ghosts and enchantments; pictures walk out of their frames and are good company for half an hour together; helmets drop from the moon and cover half a family.[4]

Hence, once more, he pleased himself in his *Mysterious Mother* with an attempt to revive upon the modern stage,

[1] *i.e.* Squires.
[2] Horace Walpole to John Chute. Letter of August 20, 1743.
[3] *Horace Walpole: A Memoir*, by Austin Dobson, p. 117. [4] *Ibid.* p. 173

in opposition to the formal classicism of plays like *Cato*, the "melodramatic" style of some of the Elizabethans:—

Il ne vous plairoit pas assurément (he writes to his friend Mme. de Deffand); il n'y a pas de beaux sentiments. Il n'y a que des passions sans envelope, des crimes, des repentis, et des horreurs.[1]

But all this liberty of spirit and imagination was only to be enjoyed by the virtuoso: it was illegitimate for the vulgar. When Walpole went to Paris he was shocked to find that polite society aired its religious scepticism before servants waiting at dinner:—

Free-thinking (said he, commenting on the circumstance,) is for oneself, surely not for society. For literature it is very amusing when one has nothing else to do . . . and besides, in this country one is sure it is only the fashion of the day.[2]

This is somewhat in the manner of Lord Froth: "To be pleased with what pleases the crowd! Now when I laugh, I always laugh alone."

As the eighteenth century advanced, Romanticism like Horace Walpole's became more and more prevalent in fashionable society, and there are touches of the *petit maître* in the criticism even of a scholar so learned as Gray. But such affectations are only the surface symptoms of a movement in society at large, deeper, wider, and more democratic. Certain needs and feelings of the human imagination had been for the time suppressed by the Revolution of 1688, and these forces, again rising into activity, were threatening to dissolve both the constitutional compromise and the classical conventions of taste by which that compromise was attended. I shall attempt in this chapter a brief criticism of the various moods of the Romantic Movement, and of the works that gave expression to it, up to the time when the dykes containing the torrent were broken down by the force of the French Revolution.[3]

[1] *Letters of the Marquise du Deffand* (1810), vol. i. p. 211.

[2] *Horace Walpole*, by Austin Dobson, p. 174

[3] An excellent account of the progress of the mediæval revival in the eighteenth century may be found in Professor Phelps' *Beginnings of the English Romantic Movement* (Boston, 1893), to which the reader is referred.

Nor is the ferly great, when nature kind
Has blest them wi' solidity o' mind.
They'll reason calmly, and wi' kindness smile,
When our short passions wad our peace beguile.
Sae, whensoe'er they slight their maiks at hame,
It's ten to ane the wives are maist to blame.
Then I'll employ wi' pleasure a' my art
To keep him cheerfu' an' secure his heart.
At e'en, when he comes weary frae the hill,
I'll hae a' things made ready to his will.
In winter, when he toils through wind and rain,
A bleezing ingle and a clean hearth-stane;
An' soon as he flings by his plaid an' staff,
The seething pats be ready to tak' aff:
Clean hag-a-bag[1] I'll spread upon his board,
And serve him wi' the best we can afford.
Good humour and white bigonets[2] shall be
Guards to my face, to keep his love for me.[3]

Allan Ramsay in his Songs often anticipates the natural style of Burns; but in *The Gentle Shepherd* his inspiration seems also to be sometimes derived from classical sources, as in the following bucolic duet:—

PEGGY. When first my dear laddie gaed to the green hill,
An' I at ewe-milking first say'd my young skill,
To bear the milk-bowie nae pain was to me
When I at the bughting foregathered wi' thee.

PATIE. When corn-riggs waved yellow, an' blue heather-bells,
Bloom'd bonny on muirland and sweet-rising fells,
Nae birns, briars, or breckens, gaed trouble to me,
Gif I found the berries right ripen'd for thee.

PEGGY. When thou ran or wrestled or putted the stane,
An' cam aff the victor, my heart was aye fain;
Thy ilka sport manly gae pleasure to me,
For nane can putt, wrestle, or run swift as thee.

PATIE. Our Jenny sings saftly the *Cowden-broom-knowes*;
And Rosie lilts sweetly the *Milking the Ewes*;
There's few *Jenny Nettles* like Nancy can sing;
At *Thro' the Wood, Laddie*, Bess gars our lugs ring:

But when my dear Peggy sings wi' better skill
The Boatman, *Tweedside*, or *The Lass o' the Mill*,

---

[1] Huck-a-back. [2] Caps.
[3] *The Gentle Shepherd*, Act 1, Sc. ii.

It's mony times sweeter an' pleasing to me;
For though they sing nicely, they cannot like thee.

PEGGY. How easy can lasses trow what they desire!
An' praises sae kindly increases love's fire:
Gie me still this pleasure; my study shall be
To mak' mysel' better and sweeter for thee.[1]

The following is in a more purely Scottish vein:—

At setting day an' rising morn
Wi' saul that still shall love thee,
I'll ask o' Heav'n thy safe return,
Wi' a' that can improve thee.
I'll visit aft the birken bush,
Where first thou kindly tauld me
Sweet tales o' love, or hid my blush,
Whilst round thou didst infald me.

To a' our haunts I will repair,
To greenwood, shaw, or fountain,
Or where the simmer day I'd share
Wi' thee upon yon mountain.
There will I tell the trees and flowers,
Frae thoughts unfeigned and tender,
By vows you're mine, by love is yours
A heart that cannot wander.[2]

From these extracts it will be readily inferred that *The Gentle Shepherd* is classical in form, romantic in feeling The romance springs partly out of the spirit of local feudalism, so strongly surviving in the country districts both of England and Scotland, partly out of the growing love of rural Nature, as opposed to the conventionalities of urban Society. In respect of the former element, Ramsay had much in common with his English contemporary William Somervile, author of *The Chase*, who was born at Edston, in Warwickshire, about 1679, his father being the chief representative of one of the oldest Norman families in England. He was admitted into Winchester College in 1692, and afterwards became a Fellow of New College, Oxford, relinquishing that position in 1704, when he came into possession of his estate. He lived chiefly in the country, doing his duty

[1] *The Gentle Shepherd*, Song x.   [2] *Ibid.* Song xi.

as justice of the peace, and enjoying the rustic amusements which he has celebrated in *The Chase* (1735), *Hobbinol* (1740), and *Field Sports* (1742). All of these poems appeared in the latter years of his life: his death took place on the 19th of July 1742. According to Shenstone, who knew him, his last days were troubled with the embarrassment of his affairs, and to drown his cares he resorted too frequently to the bottle.

Somervile's poems show little originality of form. He wrote the ordinary panegyrical Ode—for he was a Whig; imitated Prior—not very successfully—in his *Tales*; and in his poems, descriptive of country life, followed the lead of John Philips in *Cider*, and of Thomson in *The Seasons*. His personality, rather than his art, gives him a representative position among English poets. He seems to have combined some of the refined tastes of Sir Roger de Coverley[1] with those of the country squires—described by Pope in a letter to Cromwell—whose favourite poet was Tom D'Urfey.[2] But his love of the country and his acquaintance with its pursuits are unmistakably shown in his poems, which breathe a spirit as different as possible from the literary coffee-house pastoralism cultivated by Pope and Ambrose Philips. He was a friend and a great admirer of Allan Ramsay, and the following lines from the epistle which he addressed to the latter on the publication of *The Gentle Shepherd*, and in which he describes his own disposition, may be taken as indicative of the new spirit beginning to make itself felt in English Poetry. He begins his epistle by describing the sympathy with which he and his English neighbours had read the Scottish poet's verse:—

Near fair Avona's silver tide,
Whose waves in soft meanders glide,

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[1] His best-known lines are those in his address to Addison, whom he compliments on the moral effects produced by *The Spectator*:—

When panting Virtue her last efforts made,
You brought your Clio to the virgin's aid.

[2] Pope to Cromwell, 10th April 1710 (Elwin and Courthope's edition of *Pope's Works*).

I read to the delighted swains
Your jocund songs and rural strains.

And answering the invitation to visit Allan in Scotland, he proceeds:—

What a strange figure should I make,
A poor abandoned English rake;
A squire well-born and six-foot high,
Perched in that sacred pillory.[1]
Let spleen and zeal be banished thence,
And troublesome impertinence,
That tells his story o'er again:
Ill manners and his saucy train,
And self-conceit and stiff-rumpt pride,
That grin at all the world beside.
Foul scandal with a load of lies,
Intrigues, rencounters, prodigies;
Fame's busy hawker, light as air,
That feeds on frailties of the fair:
Envy, hypocrisy, deceit,
Fierce party rage, and warm debate:
And all the hell hounds that are foes
To friendship and the world's repose.
But mirth instead and dimpling smiles,
And wit that gloomy care beguiles;
And joke, and pun, and merry tale,
And toasts that round the table sail,
While laughter, bursting through the crowd
In vollies, tells our joys aloud.
Hark! the shrill piper mounts on high;
The woods, the streams, the rocks reply
To his far-sounding melody.
Behold each labouring squeeze prepare
Supplies of modulated air.
Observe Croudero's active bow,
His head still nodding to and fro,
His eyes, his cheeks, with rapture glow.
See, see, the bashful nymphs advance,
To lead the regulated dance;
Flying still, and still pursuing,
Yet with backward glances wooing.
This, this shall be the joyous scene;
Nor wanton elves, that skim the green,
Shall be so blest, so blithe, so gay,
Or less regard what dotards say

[1] *i.e.* The ecclesiastical tribunals of the Scotch Kirk.

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[1] *i.e.* The ecclesiastical tribunals of the Scotch Kirk.

My Rose shall then your Thistle greet;
The Union shall be more complete;
And in a bottle and a friend
Each national dispute shall end.[1]

The love of the country and external nature, which was inborn in Allan Ramsay and Somervile, was cultivated as an artificial sentiment by William Shenstone, owner of The Leasowes. This poet was born at Halesowen in Worcestershire on the 13th of November 1714, the son of William Shenstone of Lappal, a small proprietor in the district. His first teacher was Sarah Lloyd, whose fame he has perpetuated in *The Schoolmistress*.[2] From her charge he passed on to Halesowen Grammar School, and thence again to one Crampton of Solihull, who taught him most of his knowledge of classical literature, till, on the 17th of May 1732, he was admitted into Pembroke College, Oxford, where he seems to have resided for several years, but without taking a degree. He was still there when he published anonymously in 1737 his first volume of poems, which contained the earliest draft of *The Schoolmistress*. *The Judgment of Hercules* appeared, also anonymously, in 1741. In 1745 he came into the occupation of The Leasowes, a little property purchased by his father, on which he resided for the rest of his life, amusing himself with developing its "picturesque" features, and with showing them to strangers who came to the place out of curiosity. Here, at different dates, he wrote most of his verses, which, collected under the different titles of Elegies, Odes, Songs and Ballads, Levities and Moral Pieces, were published 1748-1758. He died on the 11th of February 1763, and was buried in Halesowen Churchyard.

Shenstone was perhaps the first English poet who cultivated sentiment and style for their own sake. A

[1] Chalmers' *English Poets*, vol. x. p. 199.

[2] He calls the poem "a deformed portrait of my old school-dame, Sarah Lloyd, whose house is to be seen as thou travellest towards the native home of thy faithful servant—but she sleeps with her fathers—and Thomas, her son, reigneth in her stead."—*Works in Verse and Prose of* William Shenstone, Esq. (1791), vol. iii. p. 46.

miniature Rousseau, who perseveringly made poetical capital out of his own moods, he exalted simplicity into an ideal:—

> O loved Simplicity! be thine the prize!
> Assiduous art correct her page in vain!
> His be the palm who, guiltless of disguise,
> Contemns the power, the dull resource to feign![1]

Rural retirement was also with him an object to be prayed for:—

> Thro' these soft shades delighted let me stray,
> While o'er my head forgotten suns descend;
> Thro' these dear valleys bend my casual way,
> Till setting life a total shade extend!
>
> Here far from courts, and void of pompous cares,
> I'll muse how much I owe mine humbler fate;
> Or think to find how much ambition dares
> To shine in anguish or to grieve in state.[2]

But, on occasions, he could find almost as much luxury in fits of the spleen—

> Bear me, ye winds, indulgent to my pains,
> Near some sad ruin's ghastly shade to dwell!
> There let me fondly eye the rude remains,
> And from the mouldering refuse build my cell![3]

In point of fact he was not happy unless his solitude was well observed. We smile as we read the reflections of the architect of Strawberry Hill on the recluse of The Leasowes:—

> Poor man! he wanted to have all the world talk of him for the pretty place he had made, and which he seems to have made only that it might be talked of![4]

Gray, too, says of Shenstone in the disdainful manner characteristic of him:—

> His whole philosophy consisted in living against his will in retirement, and in a place which his taste had adorned, but

[1] *Works in Verse and Prose of* William Shenstone, Esq (1791), Elegy I. p. 30

[2] *Ibid.* Elegy xxiii. pp. 95-6. [3] *Ibid.* Elegy xvii. p. 73.

[4] *Horace Walpole's Correspondence* (Cunningham), vol v. p. 169.

which he only enjoyed when people of note came to see and commend it.[1]

Shenstone himself confirms the justice of this judgment:—

Now I am come home from a visit, every little uneasiness is sufficient to introduce my whole train of melancholy considerations, and to make me utterly dissatisfied with the life I now lead, and the life which I foresee I shall lead. I am angry, and envious, and dejected, and frantic, and disregard all present things, just as becomes a madman to do. I am infinitely pleased (though it is a gloomy joy) with the application of Dr. Swift's complaint, "that he is forced to die in a rage, like a poisoned rat in a hole." My soul is no more suited to the figure I make than a cable rope to a cambric needle. I cannot bear to see the advantages alienated which I think I could deserve and relish so much more than those that have them. Nothing can give me patience but the soothing sympathy of a friend, and *that* will only turn my rage into simple melancholy. I believe soon I shall bear to see nobody. I *do* hate all hereabouts already except one or two. I will have my dinner brought upon my table in my absence, and the plates fetched away in my absence, and nobody shall see me: for I never can bear to appear in the same stupid mediocrity for years together and gain no ground.[2]

In spite of his affectation, Shenstone was, within his own limits, a genuine artist. It is true that the Damon of The Leasowes only valued his sheep-folds when Lady Luxborough, or the Duchess of Somerset, and others whose names appear profusely in his verse, came to admire him in them. But for all these people simplicity and melancholy were in the air, and Shenstone had the merit of inventing poetical forms fitted to express their feelings. Just as he knew how to give an effective turn to a waterfall, or to place a bench at an agreeable point of view, so he understood the way in which metre is associated with sentiment. He could always take a hint from another man's poetical practice. For example, the Elegy in the four-lined stanza of heroic verse, with alternate rhymes had just been brought into fashion by Antony

[1] Gray to Norton Nicholls, June 24, 1769.
[2] Shenstone's *Works in Verse and Prose* (1791), vol. iii. pp. 38-39.

Hammond (1710-42), an imitator of Tibullus. Shenstone, discoursing on the characteristics of Elegy, says:—

Epic and tragedy chiefly recommend the public virtues; elegy is of a species which illustrates and endears the private. There is a truly virtuous pleasure connected with many pensive contemplations, which it is the province and excellency of elegy to enforce. This, by presenting suitable ideas, has discovered sweets in melancholy which we could not find in mirth; and has led us with success to the dusty urn, when we could draw no pleasure from the sparkling bowl; as pastoral conveys an idea of simplicity and innocence, it is in particular the task and merit of elegy to show the innocence and simplicity of rural life to advantage: and that in a way distinct from pastoral, as much as the plain but judicious landlord may be imagined to surpass his *tenant both in dignity and understanding.*[1]

Hammond had confined his use of the Elegy to the purposes of love: Shenstone employed it to express all sentimental moods, and though none of these include such profound feelings as the *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*, his elegiac experiments, as having probably suggested Gray's poem, are historically interesting. So, too, in his development of the Pastoral Ballad from the metre of Rowe's *Despairing Shepherd* there is genuine metrical skill; and the source of Cowper's inspiration in the lament of Alexander Selkirk may be easily traced to the fourth section of the Ballad, of which the following stanzas, full of an artificial simplicity, will serve as an example:—

Alas! from the day that we met
  What hope of an end to my woes?
When I cannot endure to forget
  The glance that undid my repose.
Yet time may diminish the pain:
  The flower, and the shrub, and the tree,
Which I reared for her pleasure in vain,
  In time may have comfort for me.

The sweets of a dew-sprinkled rose,
  The sound of a murmuring stream,
The peace which from solitude flows,
  Henceforth shall be Corydon's dream.

[1] Shenstone's *Works in Verse and Prose*, vol. i. pp. 18-19.

High transports are shown to our sight,
But we are not to find them our own;
Fate never bestowed such delight
As I with my Phyllis had known.[1]

It was scarcely possible that the capacities of the ballad proper, as a vehicle for sentimentality, should escape the notice of such a votary of self-conscious Naturalism as Shenstone. He wrote a ballad on "Jemmy Dawson" (one of the rebels executed after the Battle of Culloden), in which the following "Early-English" stanzas will give the reader an idea of the absence of humour in the romantic moods of our ancestors in the eighteenth century:—

How pale was then his true-love's cheek,
When Jemmy's sentence reached her ear!
For never yet did Alpine snows
So pale, and yet so chill appear.

With faltering voice she weeping said,
"O Dawson, monarch of my heart,
Think not thy death shall end our love,
For thou and I will never part.

Yet might sweet mercy find a place,
And bring relief to Jemmy's woes,
O George, without a prayer for thee
My orisons should never close!"[2]

His sense of the proprieties of style is more happily illustrated in *The Schoolmistress*, which, as Johnson says, is a delightful performance, but which also shows how completely the memory of the chivalrous era had died out of English society since the Revolution of 1688. Shenstone's idea of Spenser's genius is expressed in one of his letters:—

His subject is certainly bad, and his action inexpressibly confused; but there are some particulars in him that charm one. *Those which afford the greatest scope for a ludicrous imitation* are his simplicity and obsolete phrase; and yet these are what give one a very singular pleasure in the perusal.[3]

1 Shenstone's *Works in Verse and Prose* (1791) vol. i. p. 191.
2 *Ibid.* vol. i. pp. 180-181.
3 *Ibid.* vol. iii. p. 54.

What he felt in Spenser's style he reproduced, by way of parody, with excellent humour, as in this description of a birching:—

> Ah luckless he, and born beneath the beam
> Of evil star! it irks me much to write!
> As erst the bard by Mulla's silver stream,
> Oft as he told of deadly dolorous plight,
> Sighed as he sung, and did in tears indite.
> For brandishing the rod she doth begin
> *To loose the brogues, the stripling's late delight;*
> And down they drop; appears his dainty skin,
> Fair as the furry coat of whitest ermelin.
>
> O ruthful scene! when from a nook obscure
> His little sister doth his peril see:
> All playful as she sate, she grows demure:
> She finds full soon her wonted spirits flee;
> She meditates a prayer to set him free:
> Nor gentle pardon could this Dame deny
>
> . . . .
>
> . . . .
>
> The other tribe, aghast with sore dismay,
> Attend and conn their tasks with mickle care;
> By turns astonied, every twig survey,
> And from their fellow's hateful wounds beware,
> Knowing, I wist, how each the same may share;
> Till fear has taught them a performance meet,
> And to the well-known chest the Dame repair,
> Whence oft with sugared cates she doth 'em greet,
> And ginger-bread y-rare; now, certes, doubly sweet!
>
> See, to their seats they hye with merry glee,
> And in beseemly order sitten there;
> All but the wight of bum y-galled, he
> Abhorreth bench, and stool, and fourm, and chair:
> (This hand in mouth y-fixed, that rends his hair);
> And eke with sobs profound and heaving breast,
> *Convulsions intermitting, doth declare*
> His grievous wrong; his Dame's unjust behest;
> And scorns her offered love, and shuns to be caressed.[1]

With Shenstone may be classed, as an elegiac poet

[1] Shenstone's *Works in Verse and Prose*, vol. i. pp. 326-328.

his friend and neighbour, George Lyttelton, of Hagley Park. The son of Sir Thomas Lyttelton, he was born in 1709, and was educated first at Eton, where he distinguished himself in scholarship, and afterwards at Christ Church, Oxford, to which he was admitted on the 11th of February 1726. After residing there for about three years he went abroad and travelled in Italy and France. His first published poem, *Blenheim*, which appeared in 1728, was written at Oxford. On his return from his travels he published in 1732 his *Progress of Love* and in 1735 his *Persian Letters*, but in the latter year his attention was diverted to politics, and he was sent to Parliament as M.P. for Okehampton. He now became one of the leading members of the Opposition, and made himself conspicuous by his declamations against Walpole's corrupt methods of administration, who in return was accustomed to jeer at him and Pitt as "the Boys." Becoming secretary to Frederick Prince of Wales in 1737, he persuaded the latter to aim at popularity as a patron of literature, and above all to enlist the services of Pope. With that great poet he was on terms of intimacy, and was praised by him both for his own virtues as an ardent patriot, and as the secretary of a future "Patriot King."

In 1742 he married Lucy, daughter of Hugh Fortescue of Filleigh, Devonshire, but lost his wife, to whom he was fondly attached, and whose memory is preserved in his *Monody*, in January 1746-7. Her death may have caused a change in his religious convictions, for having hitherto inclined to the free-thinking opinions of Bolingbroke, he published, in 1747, his *Observations on the Conversion of St. Paul*, signalising thereby his adherence to the dogmas of the Christian faith. On the 10th of August 1749 he married, for his second wife, the daughter of Sir Robert Rich, and in 1751, on the death of his father, he succeeded to the baronetcy. For a short time he held, in 1755, the Chancellorship of the Exchequer in the Duke of Newcastle's Ministry; but he did not retain office under Pitt, though in 1756 he was raised to the

peerage for his services. He henceforth devoted himself mainly to literature, publishing his *Dialogues of the Dead* in 1760, and his *History of Henry II.* between 1767 and 1771. He died on the 22nd of August 1773, and was buried at Hagley. Besides the mention of Lyttelton by Pope, his name is closely associated, as a friend, with those of Gilbert West and Shenstone, and, as a patron, with that of Thomson. It is in the excellent prologue to Thomson's *Coriolanus*, produced after the poet's death, that Lyttelton's best-remembered verse occurs, in which he says that Thomson left behind him not

> One line which, dying, he could wish to blot.

His own place among the English poets is due much more to the influence which he exercised on others, through his taste and character, than to his original productions. Lord Waldegrave says of him:—

> Sir George Lyttelton was an enthusiast in religion and politics; absent in business; not ready in a debate: and totally ignorant of the world.[1]

It might have been added that he was also an enthusiast in literature. Full of generous feeling, he had not enough of original thought to let his personality penetrate through the forms of conventional expression. He is always an imitator; yet his work is of interest, as showing how strongly the social tendency to "nature-worship" was influencing Englishmen of education and accomplishment, who had been brought up within the strict limits of classical reserve. The following pathetic stanza from his *Monody*, which was much admired by Gray,[2] may illustrate this remark:

> In vain I look around
> O'er all the well-known ground,
> My Lucy's wonted footsteps to descry!
> Where oft we used to walk,
> Where oft in tender talk
> We saw the summer sun go down the sky.

[1] *Memoirs*, p. 25.
[2] Letter to Wharton, 30th Nov. 1747, and to Walpole, letter without date in 1747.

Nor by yon fountain's side,
Nor where its waters glide
Along the valley can she now be found,
In all the wide-stretched prospect's ample bound:
No more my mournful eye
Can aught of her espy,
But the sad sacred earth where her dear relics lie.

And in the lines addressed *To Mr. West at Wickham*, we see Lyttelton's appreciation of the "simplicity" praised by Shenstone, expressed without Shenstone's artificiality :—

Fair Nature's sweet simplicity
With elegance refined,
Well in thy seat, my friend, I see,
But better in thy mind.
To both from courts and all their state
Eager I fly, to prove
Joys far above a courtier's fate,
Tranquillity and love.[1]

From Pastoralism and Elegy it is an easy step to Lyric verse. As the former poetical tendency signified a revival of the rural instincts of that feudal England which had been more or less overlaid by the coffee-house habits and town tastes encouraged by the Revolution of 1688; so the latter implied something of a reaction on behalf of sentiment and imagination against the ethical reasoning which, as we have seen, carried along the genius of Pope almost in his own despite.

The public (says Joseph Warton in the prefatory note to his *Odes on Various Subjects*, published in 1746,) has been so much accustomed of late to didactic poetry alone, and essays on moral subjects, that any work where the imagination is much indulged will perhaps not be relished or regarded. The author, therefore, of these pieces is in some pain lest certain austere critics shall think them too fanciful and descriptive. But as he is convinced that the fashion of moralising in verse has been carried too far, and as he looks upon Invention and Imagination to be the chief faculties of a Poet, so he will be happy if the following Odes may be looked upon as an attempt to bring back poetry into its right channel.

[1] See p. 270.

From the key-note thus struck was developed that futile, but rather mischievous, line of argument, to prove that Pope was not a "poetical" poet, which, proceeding through the latter half of the eighteenth century, was brought to a wearisome climax in the dispute between Bowles, Byron, and others, in the second decade of the nineteenth. The protagonists of the new lyrical movement were Joseph and Thomas Warton, the sons of Thomas Warton, Professor of Poetry at Oxford during the years 1728-38, and Vicar of Basingstoke, himself a writer of verse, which here and there foreshadows the romantic tendencies of the family in the next generation. Joseph was born at Dunsfold, Surrey, in 1722. He was educated first at the Basingstoke Grammar School, from which in 1735 he was elected scholar at Winchester, proceeding thence on the 16th of January 1739-40 to Oriel College, Oxford. He graduated as B.A. on the 13th of March 1743-44, and became curate to his father at Basingstoke in 1746.

In 1746, the same year that Collins brought out his *Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegoric Subjects*, Warton published a volume containing his *Odes on Various Subjects*, together with other poems, among which was *The Enthusiast*. The odes are not remarkable, but *The Enthusiast* is noteworthy, as being perhaps the earliest deliberate expression in England (for it is said to have been written in 1740) of the feeling in which the Romantic movement originated. The writer, in a passage of classico-mythological imagery, declares his preference for Shakespeare's "native wood-note wild" over the "correct" compositions of his own century:—

What are the lays of artful Addison,
Coldly correct, to Shakespeare's warblings wild?
Whom on the winding Avon's willow banks
Fair fancy found, and bore the smiling babe
To a close cavern (still the shepherds show
The sacred place, whence with religious awe
They hear, *returning from the field at eve*,
[illegible]

Oft soothed his wondering ears with deep delight:
On her soft lap he sat and caught the sounds.

It is entertaining to note the visions of a Golden Age with which the future respectable headmaster of Winchester indulged his youthful fancy:—

Happy the first of men, ere yet confined
To smoky cities; who in sheltering groves,
Warm caves, and deep-sunk vallies, lived and loved,
By cares unwounded; what the sun and showers,
And genial earth untillaged could produce,
They gathered grateful, or the acorn brown,
Or blushing berry; by the liquid lapse
Of murmuring waters called to slake their thirst.

. . . . . .

Then doors and walls were not; the melting maid
Nor frowns of parents feared, nor husband's threats;
Nor had curst gold their tender hearts allured.
Then beauty was not venal. Injured Love,
O whither, God of raptures, art thou fled,
While avarice waves his golden wand around,
Abhorred magician, and his costly cup
Prepares with baneful drugs t'enchant the soul?

And it is yet more interesting, as evidence of the continuity in the Romantic Movement, to observe how the somewhat grotesque aspirations of *The Enthusiast* anticipate the Rousseau-inspired resolutions of the lover in *Locksley Hall*:—

O who will bear me then to western climes,
(Since virtue leaves our wretched land) to fields
Yet unpolluted with Iberian swords;
To isles of innocence from mortal view
Deeply retired, beneath a platane's shade,
Where Happiness and Quiet sit enthroned;
With simple Indian swains that I may hunt
The boar and tiger through savannahs wild,
Through fragrant deserts, and through citron groves?
There, fed on dates and herbs, would I despise
The far-fetched cates of Luxury, and hoards
Of narrow-hearted avarice, nor heed
The distant din of the tumultuous world.

Joseph did not realise his poetic dream. In 1748 he was appointed to the Rectory of Winslade, and was in

hopes of further promotion, when, under not very creditable circumstances, he went abroad in 1751 with the Duke of Bolton and his mistress, Lavinia Fenton, prepared to marry them after the hourly expected death of the then Duchess. The latter, however, rallied, and Warton missed the preferment, which would doubtless have otherwise been the reward of his services. On his return to England he published in 1753 an edition of *Virgil*, to which were appended Essays on Pastoral, Didactic, and Epic Poetry, and in the same year he contributed to *The World*,[1] an essay on "Simplicity in Taste," which defined more precisely the æsthetic principles he was endeavouring to propagate. In 1755 he became second Master of Winchester, and in 1757 published his most noteworthy work, the *Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope*. He was advanced in 1766 to the Headmastership of Winchester, which he held to the end of his life, managing to combine with it a good deal of ecclesiastical preferment; since in 1782 he was made Prebendary of London; in 1783, Vicar of Chorley in Hertfordshire; Prebendary of Winchester in 1788; Vicar of Wickham in Hampshire, which living he held with that of Easton to which he was appointed in 1790. This he soon exchanged for Upham in Hampshire, and continued to hold the latter together with Wickham, till his death on the 23rd of February 1800. He was buried in Winchester Cathedral. His edition of Pope's Works, his last literary labour, was published in 1797.

Thomas Warton was born at Basingstoke on the 9th of January 1727-8. After being educated by his father, he was entered at Trinity College, Oxford, on the 16th of March 1743-4, and took his B.A. degree in 1747 and his M.A. in 1750, becoming Fellow of his College in 1751. His first poetical work was *The Pleasures of Melancholy*, written in 1745, in which he developed the elegiac theory defined by Shenstone. In 1749 appeared his *Triumph of Isis*, an answer to Mason's Elegy *Isis*, in which the Cambridge poet had reflected on the Tory

[1] No. 26.

sympathies of the sister University. His romantic tendencies were further disclosed by his *Observations on the Faery Queen of Spenser*, published in 1754; but his tastes in this direction were almost balanced by his feeling for classical literature. During his tenure of the Poetry Chair at Oxford, from 1757 to 1767 he seems to have produced little, but at the close of his term he published his edition of *Theocritus* (1770), and the first volume of his *History of English Poetry* (1774). The second volume of this work appeared in 1778, and in 1881 the third, beyond which point indolence did not allow Warton to proceed. His appointment to the office of Poet Laureate in 1785 perhaps diverted some of his attention; but he found time in that year to publish an edition of Milton's early poems. He died at Oxford on the 21st of May 1790.

Thomas, if his mind was less critically energetic than that of his brother, had a more versatile fancy and a finer taste. Joseph could feel the necessity of enthusiasm in poetry, but his lyric verse is of the tamest character. On the other hand, Thomas, whose early taste had doubtless been directed by the elder Warton's influence, was able to embody his emotions in concrete imagery. In *The Pleasures of Melancholy*, written when he was only seventeen, the following lines are notable:—

> Beneath yon ruined abbey's moss-grown piles
> Oft let me sit at twilight hour of eve,
> When thro' some western window the pale moon
> Pours her long levelled rule of streaming light;
> While sullen sacred silence reigns around,
> And the lone screech-owl's note, who builds his bower
> Amid the mouldering caverns, dark and damp,
> On the calm breeze, that rustles in the leaves,
> Of flaunting ivy, that with mantle green
> Invests some wasted tower.

From a taste for mediæval ruins his imagination, nourished on the study of the *Faery Queen* and the early poems of Milton, was diverted into the paths trodden before by Leland, Camden, and Selden; and his love of

antiquities is well illustrated by his fine sonnet on Stonehenge:—

Thou noblest monument of Albion's isle!
Whether by Merlin's aid from Scythia's shore,
To Amber's fatal plain Pendragon bore,

. . . .

Or Danish chiefs, enriched with savage spoil,
To Victory's idol vast, an unhewn shrine
Reared the rude heap; or in thy hallowed round
Repose the kings of Brutus' genuine line;
Or here those kings in solemn state were crowned:
Studious to trace thy wondrous origin,
We muse on many an ancient tale renowned.

From the critical point of view, however, the most interesting verses that Thomas Warton ever wrote are those *On Sir Joshua Reynold's Painted Window at New College, Oxford.* In these the historian of English Poetry makes a kind of recantation of his romanticism. Beginning with a reproach to the great painter for dispelling his dreams, he continues:—

For long enamoured of a barbarous age,
A faithless truant to the classic page,
Long have I loved to catch the simple chime
Of minstrel harps and spell the fabling rime;
To view the festive rites, the knightly play,
That decked heroic Albion's elder day,
To mark the mouldering halls of barons bold,
And the rough castle cast in giant mould,
With Gothic manners Gothic arts explore,
And muse on the magnificence of yore.

After describing his delight in Gothic architecture, he proceeds to show his appreciation of the qualities of classic perfection:—

Such was a pensive bard's mistaken strain—
But oh! of ravished pleasures why complain?
No more the matchless skill I call unkind,
That strives to disenchant my cheated mind.
For when again I view thy chaste design;
The just proportion and the genuine line;

Those native portraitures of Attic art,
That from the lucid surface seem to start;
Those tints that steal no glories from the day,
Nor ask the sun to lend his streaming ray!
The doubtful radiance of contending dyes,
That faintly mingle yet distinctly rise;
'Twixt light and shade the transitory strife;
The feature blooming with immortal life;
The stole in casual foldings taught to flow,
Not with ambitious ornaments to glow;
The tread majestic and the beaming eye,
That, lifted, speaks its commerce with the sky;
Heaven's golden emanation, gleaming mild,
O'er the mean cradle of the Virgin's Child:
Sudden the sombrous imagery is fled,
Which late my visionary rapture fed:
Thy powerful hand has broke the Gothic chain,
And brought my bosom back to Truth again;
To truth to no peculiar taste confined
Whose universal pattern strikes mankind;
To Truth, whose bold and unresisted aim
Checks frail caprice and fashion's fickle claim;
To Truth, whose charms deception's magic quell,
And bind coy Fancy in a stronger spell.

It is Sir Joshua's gift, he says, to be able to unite the classic and romantic styles:—

Reynolds! 'tis thine from the broad window's height
To add new lustre to religious light:
Not of its pomp to strip this ancient shrine,
But bid that pomp with purer radiance shine,
With arts unknown before to reconcile
The willing Graces to the Gothic pile.

Viewed on the whole, the two Wartons may be regarded as the conscious and critical pioneers of the Romantic Movement in English Poetry. Joseph was the first to raise a protest on behalf of lyrical poetry against the prevailing ethical and didactic tendencies of his age. Thomas, by an elaborate note in his *Observations on the Faery Queen*, gave the signal for the revival of Gothic Architecture, and indicated the study of national antiquities as the richest source of lyric enthusiasm; while in his *Grave of Arthur* he anticipated, both in respect of matter and style, the romantic metrical narratives of Walter Scott.

But neither of these brothers was possessed of native poetical genius, and the enchanted horn which they had discovered, hung before the Castle of Romance, remained to be sounded by two poets of more powerful inspiration.

There is much difference of opinion between critics as to the respective claims to supremacy, among the English lyric poets in the eighteenth century, of William Collins and Thomas Gray. My own admiration is so equally suspended between their rival qualities that I think the genius of each may be best illustrated by a comparison of their work, but, before making this attempt, it will be well to give a brief account of their lives, of which one was as short as the other was uneventful.

William Collins was baptized in the Church of St. Peter the Great, Chichester, on the 1st of January 1721, being the son of William Collins, a prominent citizen, then mayor of the town, and Elizabeth Martin, his wife He was admitted in 1733 as a scholar of Winchester, and in 1740 stood first in succession to New College, Joseph Warton being second on the roll; but as there was no vacancy he was entered at Queen's College, Oxford, and continued there till July 1741, when he was elected demy of Magdalen. He carried on his Winchester friendship with Joseph Warton during his Oxford life, and it appears from the evidence of Thomas Warton that Collins was so far influenced by the active intelligence of his schoolfellow as to avail himself in his *Odes* of several hints which Joseph had given in his own boyish exercises. During his residence at Oxford he published, anonymously in 1743, his *Persian Eclogues* and his *Verses to Sir Thomas Hanmer on his edition of Shakespeare's Works.* Before taking his degree he came to London, Johnson says in 1744, Langhorne in 1743, hoping to obtain literary employment. He issued proposals for a History of the Revival of Learning, of which it is evident from his odes that he had formed a very clear conception, but he did not proceed with the work. He also undertook a translation of Aristotle's *Poetics* for a bookseller, who on this

engagement advanced him a sum of money; but happening soon afterwards to receive a legacy of £2000 from his maternal uncle, Colonel Martin, he repaid the debt and abandoned the translation. His life in London was mainly occupied in amusements: he haunted literary coffee-houses, where his company and opinion were much in request; and having made Garrick's acquaintance he became a frequent and critical attendant at the theatres. In 1746 he published *Odes on Several Descriptive and Allegoric Subjects* almost at the same time that Joseph Warton was producing his *Odes on various Subjects.* The latter were fairly popular, and reached a second edition; Collins' volume, on the contrary, was neglected, and this indifference of the public moved him to such just indignation that he burned with his own hands the copies of the edition that remained unsold.

Besides the poems that appeared in this volume he printed in 1749 his *Ode occasioned by the Death of Mr. Thomson* and his *Dirge in Cymbeline*, which first appeared in *The Gentleman's Magazine* for October of that year. In the following year it seems, from a letter written by him to Dr. William Hayes, Professor of Music at Oxford, that he had completed an *Ode on the Music of the Grecian Theatre*, the disappearance of which constitutes a genuine loss to English poetry. A dreadful mental calamity soon afterwards overwhelmed him, destroying all his enjoyment of life, and blasting his productive powers, so that for nearly nine years before his death poetical invention seems to have deserted him. He was not, however, altogether deprived of understanding, and in his last illness he was able to show Joseph and Thomas Warton the long *Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands*, composed in 1749, and, in the opinion of these critics, superior to anything he had previously written. He died on the 15th of June 1759, and was buried in the Church of St. Andrew's, Chichester.

The life and fortunes of Gray were of an entirely different character. He was the fifth son (and the only child who survived beyond infancy) of Philip Gray, a

scrivener of London, and was born in Cornhill on the 26th of November 1716. His father, a man of violent, capricious, and jealous temper, ill-used his wife, Dorothy Antrobus, who seems in 1735 to have vainly attempted to obtain a separation from him. She had a small income of her own, derived from a shop which she kept with one of her sisters, and by means of which she contrived, in a truly valiant spirit, to support herself and to provide for her son's education, towards which his father contributed nothing. In 1727 the boy was sent to Eton, where he became a member of what was called "the quadruple alliance," consisting of Gray himself, Horace Walpole, Thomas Ashton, and Richard West, the subject of Gray's well-known sonnet. Three of the friends afterwards went to Cambridge: the fourth, West, who was to Gray what Charles Deodati was to Milton, diverged from the alliance and entered Christ Church, Oxford. He died in 1742. Gray was admitted to Peterhouse, as a pensioner, in 1734, and continued to reside at Cambridge as an undergraduate for about five years, ill-contented with the mathematical studies of the place, but making himself master of Latin Greek, and Italian.

In 1739 Horace Walpole, who had been appointed by his father to more than one lucrative sinecure post, proposed to Gray that they should make the "Grand Tour" in company. The latter consented, and spent two enjoyable years on the Continent, but at Reggio in Italy the friends quarrelled, and returned to England by different routes. Soon after his arrival in September 1741 Gray's father died, leaving his widow in narrow circumstances, who found it expedient to part with her London business, and to keep house with two sisters at Stoke Pogis. Gray himself for a short time made one of the family here, but finding that his presence was a burden on their limited resources, he resolved to return to Peterhouse, with a view to complete his study of the law. Having once resumed his life at Cambridge (where he soon afterwards took the degree of B.C.L.), he continued it, with only a few intervals, till his death, resembling in this respect his

contemporary, Thomas Warton, who lived and died at Oxford.

He found indeed little pleasure in the society of his College, being on ill terms with most of the common room, and in 1756 he removed from Peterhouse to Pembroke Hall, where, however, he suffered almost equal discomforts from the mischief of the undergraduates. All this tended to confirm in him his natural tendency to live as a recluse among his books. On the death of Cibber an offer was made to him of the Laureateship, which was declined, and, in spite of his dislike of University society, he seems to have made up his mind to endure it, for in 1762 he applied to Lord Bute for the then vacant Professorship of Modern History. His application was unsuccessful, the appointment being given to one Brockett, tutor of Sir James Lowther. For a short time in 1759 he took lodgings in London near the British Museum, for the sake of using the reading-room in that institution, then lately opened; and he occasionally left Cambridge on visits to a few intimate friends, such as Horace Walpole; otherwise the only considerable intervals of absence from Cambridge seem to have been his journey to Scotland in 1765, and his visit to Westmoreland and Cumberland in 1769. In 1768, on the death of Brockett by a fall from his horse, Gray was appointed by the Duke of Grafton, without any solicitation on his part, to the Professorship of Modern History, and retained it till his death on the 30th of July 1771. He was buried at Stoke Pogis.

His poetical works in English were produced in the following order. The fragment *Agrippina*, discontinued after the criticism of his friend West, was written in 1742, and in the same year he composed his *Odes to Spring*, *To Adversity*, and *On the Prospect of Eton College*. His ode *On the Death of Mr. Walpole's Cat* was written in 1747, and published, together with that *On the Prospect of Eton College*, in the same year. The *Elegy* appeared first in 1751, being shortly afterwards followed by the *Long Story*. In 1753 all that he had hitherto written was

printed in a volume, with designs by Bentley. *The Progress of Poetry* and *The Bard* (which in 1759 were parodied in Lloyd's and Colman's *Odes to Obscurity and Oblivion*) appeared in 1757; and *The Fatal Sisters; The Descent of Odin; The Triumphs of Owen; The Death of Hoel, Caradoc, and Conan*—written in 1761—in 1767.

In the lyrical poetry of Collins and Gray several points of great historical interest present themselves for consideration. Of these the most important are—I. The reasons for the dislike of their odes entertained by a considerable portion of contemporary English society, represented by such critics as Johnson and Goldsmith: II. The particular character of their lyrical poetry viewed in mutual relation: III. Their place in English poetry, as determined by their relation to the movement of the Renaissance, on the one hand, and to the Romantic movement, on the other.

I. Johnson's judgment on Collins' poetical style is as follows:—

> His diction was often harsh, unskilfully laboured, and injudiciously selected. He affected the obsolete when it was not worthy of revival; and he put his words out of the common order, seeming to t[illegible] that not to write prose [illegible] monly are of slow [illegible] consonants.[2]

Of Gray's *Progress of Poesy* and *Bard* he says:—

> These odes are marked by glittering accumulations of un-[illegible] than please, the images [illegible] guage is laboured into [illegible] s to work with unnatural [illegible] uble." He has a kind of strutting dignity, and is tall by walking upon tiptoe. His art and his struggle are too visible, and there is too little appearance of ease and nature.[3]

Goldsmith, criticising the same poems, says:—

[1] Evidently meaning Gray. [2] *Lives of the Poets* Collins.
[3] *Ibid.* Gray

These two odes, it must be confessed, breathe much of the spirit of Pindar: but then they have caught the seeming obscurity, the sudden transition, and the hazardous epithet of his mighty master; all which, though evidently intended for beauties, will probably be regarded as blemishes by the majority of readers. In short they are in some measure a representation of what Pindar now appears to be; though perhaps not what he appeared to the States of Greece, when they rivalled each other in his applause, and when Pan himself was often seen dancing to his melody.[1]

Criticism of this sort is now often put aside as being the product of prejudice, even of envy, and it need not be denied that these distorting influences had their effect on the judgment both of Johnson and Goldsmith. But those who have followed the course of this history will probably be of opinion that the censures are due in a much greater degree to a genuine, if misapplied, artistic perception. In the view of both Johnson and Goldsmith, poetry ought to be the reflection of some active moral principle in the life of society. They thought that Pope was right, when he "stooped to truth and moralised his song." They hated anything in the shape of revivalism, because to them it savoured of affectation, which they held, and justly, to be the deadliest of artistic sins. For the same reason they disapproved of the form of poetic diction adopted by Collins and Gray, holding, with the Attic writers, Horace, and Castiglione,[2] that the true basis of metrical composition was the colloquial idiom of living society, refined by literary practice. As may be seen from Goldsmith's panegyric on Parnell, already cited, they regarded the couplet in its traditional development as the true vehicle for classical simplicity of expression, and they were displeased with the more purely literary forms of diction evolved out of the imitation of Pindar. Johnson has applied his critical principle to Gray's individual phrases in such a way as to appear captious and bigoted; the principle itself, however, is intelligible enough.

II. As to the superiority of Gray or Collins, when compared with each other, the judgment of Hazlitt may

[1] *Monthly Review*, September 1757. [2] See vol. ii. pp. 19-20.

be taken as representative of those who urge the claims of the latter. He says:—

Collins had that true *vivida vis*, that genuine inspiration, which alone can give birth to the highest efforts of poetry. He leaves stings in the minds of his readers, certain traces of thought and feelings which never wear out, because nature had left them in his own mind. He is the only one of the minor poets of whom, if he had lived, it cannot be said that he might not have done the greatest things. The germ is there. He is sometimes affected, unmeaning, and obscure; but he also catches rich glimpses of the bowers of paradise, and has lofty aspirations after the highest seats of the Muses. With a great deal of tinsel and splendid patchwork, he has not been able to hide the solid sterling ore of genius. In his best works there is an Attic simplicity, a pathos and fervour of imagination, which make us the more lament that the efforts of his mind were at first depressed by neglect and pecuniary embarrassments, and at length buried in the gloom of an unconquerable and fatal malady. I should conceive that Collins had a much greater poetical genius than Gray: he had more of that fine madness which is inseparable from it, of its turbid effervescence, of all that pushes it to the verge of agony or rapture.[1]

With the exception of the last sentence all this seems to me truly and admirably said; nevertheless, it does not follow from it that Collins was a greater poet than Gray. In temperament, I agree with Hazlitt that the advantage lay with Collins He had constitutionally all the *enthusiasm* that the Wartons wished to see revived in poetry; Gray had not. It is impossible to read Gray's letters without perceiving his lack of those animal spirits which carried poor Collins along, till he exemplified the truth of Dryden's saying:—

Great wits are sure to madness near allied,
And thin partitions do their bounds divide.

Gray says of himself:—

Mine you are to know is a white Melancholy, or rather Leucocholy, which, though it seldom laughs or dances, nor ever amounts to what one calls Joy or Pleasure, yet is a good easy

[1] *Lectures on English Poets*, p 230.

sort of state *ça me laisse que de s'amuser.* The only fault is its vapidity, which is apt now and then to give a sort of Ennui, which makes one form certain little wishes that signify nothing.[1]

And again :—

Company and cards at home, parties by land and water abroad, and what they call *doing something*, that is racketing about from morning to night, are occupations, I find, that wear out my spirits, especially in a situation where one might sit still and be alone with pleasure.[2]

To cite the words of his eloquent biographer, Mr. Gosse :—

He never henceforward habitually rose above the deadly dulness of the spirits. His melancholy was passive and under control, not acute and rebellious like that of Cowper, but it was almost more enduring.[3]

From a constitution of this kind, we scarcely expect the rush of emotion which ought to be characteristic of a proclaimed follower of Pindar; in point of grandeur of imagery and fervour of metrical movement, there is, in my opinion, no single passage in Gray's Odes that equals the opening strophe in Collins' *Ode to Liberty* :—

Who shall awake the Spartan fife,
And call in solemn sounds to life
The youths, whose locks, divinely spreading,
Like vernal hyacinths in sullen hue,
At once the breath of fear and virtue shedding,
Applauding Freedom loved of old to view?
What new Alcæus, fancy-blest,
Shall sing the sword, in myrtles drest,
At Wisdom's shrine awhile its flame concealing,
(What place so fit to seal a deed renowned?),
Till, she her brightest lightnings round revealing,
It leaped in glory forth, and dealt her prompted wound!
O goddess, in that feeling hour,
When most its sounds would court thy ears,
Let not my shell's misguided power
E'er draw thy sad, thy mindful tears!
No, Freedom, no, I will not tell
How Rome, before thy weeping face,

[1] Gray to West, 27th May 1742. [2] Gosse, *Gray*, p. 148.
[3] *Ibid.* p. 13.

With heaviest sound, a giant statue, fell,
Pushed by a wild and artless race
From off its wide ambitious base,
When Time his northern sons of toil awoke,
And all the blended work of strength and grace,
With many a rude repeated stroke,
And many a barbarous yell to thousand fragments broke.

Moreover, it is to be remembered that from Collins Gray evidently derived the inspiration for his Pindaric Odes. He had read his predecessor's poems in 1747: he did not produce *The Bard* or *The Progress of Poesy* till 1757; the Odes which he composed in 1742 breathe an elegiac and ethic air, quite different from the later ones; and these owe many of their ideas, and something of their structure, to the work of the younger poet.

On the other hand, in architectural design and ornament, Gray was Collins' superior. I cannot agree, indeed, with Mr. Gosse in thinking that Collins' work was wanting in these qualities. The *Ode to Liberty* seems to me to have been carefully thought out, the conclusion, with which Mr. Gosse finds fault, being, in my judgment, very finely conceived. The Second Epode is evidently allegorical, and the imagery employed to express the uncertain origin of British Constitutional Liberty, as well as the certainty of its future triumph throughout the western world, is truly noble and exalted. But, as a finished workman, Collins is often open to reproach. It is worth noting that Gray and Johnson both blame him on just the same grounds. The former, writing in 1747 of his Odes, as compared with Joseph Warton's, which had appeared at the same time, says:—

Each is the half of a considerable man, and one the counterpart of the other. The first has but little invention, very poetical choice of expression, and a good ear. The second a fine fancy, modelled upon the antique, great variety of words and images, with no choice at all. They both deserve to last some years, but will not.[1]

This ill-proportioned estimate of Collins by Gray is curious, but his strictures in some points are not unjust.

[1] Letter to Thomas Wharton, December 27, 1746.

Considering, indeed, that the *Ode to Evening* and the *Ode written in the Beginning of the Year 1746*, were both included in the volume criticised by him, he showed insensibility in saying that Collins failed to exercise choice of words and images; but it is true that the latter, carried away by his own enthusiasm, often did not pause to consider whether the phrases in which he conveyed his thoughts would be as clear to the reader as they were to himself. Hence, his images are sometimes blurred and indistinct; witness the following stanzas from the *Ode to Simplicity*:—

> No more in hall or bower
> The Passions own thy power;
> Love, only Love, her[1] forceless numbers *mean*:
> For thou hast left her shrine,
> Nor olive more, nor vine,
> Shall *gain thy feet* to bless the servile scene.
>
> Though taste, though genius *bless*
> *To some divine excess*,
> Faints the cold work till thou inspire the whole;
> What each, what all supply
> May court, may charm our eye,
> Thou, only thou, *canst raise the meeting soul.*
>
> Of *these*[2] let others ask
> To aid some mighty task,
> I only seek to find thy temperate vale;
> Where oft my reed might sound
> To maids and shepherds round,
> And all thy sons, O Nature, learn my tale.

It may safely be said that Gray's diction is never obscure like this; with him each phrase is clearly cut, and in *The Bard* every allusion, however far it may lie below the surface, is intelligible; there is no single poem of Collins which can, architecturally, compare with the grand structure of that splendid ode. The virtue of Collins seems to lie in the magic beauty of the words—pure and crystalline as the dew from which he draws so many ideas—by means of which he calls up abstract and almost evanescent images, as in these delightful lines:—

[1] *i.e.* Rome's.

[2] Presumably "taste and genius."

Long, Pity, let the nations view
Thy sky-worn robes of tenderest blue,
And eyes of dewy light.

Or the description of Evening:—

Or if chill blustering winds, or driving rain,
Prevent my willing feet, be mine the hut,
That from the mountain's side
Views wilds, and swelling floods,
And hamlets brown, and dim-discovered spires;
And hears their simple bell, and marks o'er all,
Thy dewy fingers draw
The gradual dusky veil.

The excellence of Gray consists in the glittering array of ideas and phrases, in which each of his Odes is made to march towards the end designed.

III. And this leads us naturally to the consideration of the place of Gray and Collins in English Poetry, and of the different effects produced on their genius by the Classical Renaissance. For, if the Pindaric poems of either be compared with those of Chiabrera, on the one hand, or with those of Cowley, on the other, the reader is at once struck by the contrast of the several styles. In Chiabrera the imitation is purely formal; the structure of the Greek Ode may be observed, but the spirit and life of Pindar are absent. In Cowley, on the contrary, no attempt is made to reproduce the Greek form: the poet chooses something in the spirit of the Greek, with which he sympathises and transmutes it into his own form and language. Gray and Collins take a way different from either of these. Understanding by sympathy the spiritual significance of Pindar's style, they endeavour to preserve the Greek structure of the Ode, as far as it is compatible with English traditions. They well knew that the greatness of a nation's art depends upon the state of its freedom and morals. Hence the enthusiastic patriotism that constantly breaks through their most classical strains. This animates the whole of Collins' *Ode to Liberty*: it inspires a stanza of his fine *Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the*

Highlands of Scotland;[1] it gives a peculiarly English character to the *Ode to Simplicity*:—

O sister meek of Truth,
To my admiring Youth
Thy sober aid and native charms infuse!
The flowers that sweetest breathe,
Though Beauty culled the wreath,
Still ask thy hand to range their ordered hues.

While Rome could none esteem
But virtue's patriot theme,
You loved her hills, and led her laureate band:
But staid to sing alone
To one distinguished throne;
And turned thy face, and fled her altered land.

In the same spirit Gray writes in his *Progress of Poesy*:—

Woods, that wave o'er Delphi's steep,
Isles, that crown th' Ægean deep,
Fields, that cool Ilissus laves,
Or where Mæander's amber waves
In lingering lab'rinths creep,
How do your tuneful echoes languish,
Mute, but to the voice of anguish?
Where each old poetic mountain
Inspiration breathed around;
Every shade and hallowed fountain
Murmured deep a solemn sound:
Till the sad Nine, in Greece's evil hour,
Left their Parnassus for the Latian plains;
Alike they scorn the pomp of tyrant Power,
And coward Vice that revels in her chains.
When Latium had her lofty spirit lost,
They sought, O Albion! next thy sea-encircled coast.

So much energy did the free political activity of English society impart to the verse of these two admirable poets. At the same time both of them were alive to the literary inspiration of romance, which was beginning to breathe upon the atmosphere of their age. Collins, the schoolfellow of one of the Wartons, the friend of both, was more particularly moved by lyrical influences in the past which seemed almost to have forsaken his own generation.

[1] Number v.

An ardent admirer of the Greek tragic poets, of Shakespeare, and of Milton, his verse is filled with glowing, though often despondent, aspirations for the recovery of their departed music. Thus, in the noble lines concluding his *Ode on the Poetical Character*, he says :—

I view that oak, the fancied glades among,
By which as Milton lay, his evening ear
From many a cloud that dropped ethereal dew,
Nigh-sphered in heaven, its native strains could hear;
On which that ancient trump he reached was hung:
    Thither oft his glory greeting,
    From Waller's myrtle shades retreating,
With many a vow from Hope's asp'ring tongue,
My trembling feet his guiding steps pursue;
    In vain—such bliss to one alone,
    Of all the sons of soul, was known;
    And Heaven and Fancy, kindred powers,
Have now o'erturned the inspiring bowers,
Or curtained close such scene from every future view.

With Collins the inspiration of the Renaissance naturally shaped itself into Greek forms. His fancy, like that of Shelley, roamed freely through all the varieties of spiritual polytheism. "He loved," says Johnson, rather sarcastically, "fairies, genii, giants, and monsters; he delighted to rove through the mæanders of enchantment, to gaze on the magnificence of golden palaces, to repose by the waterfalls of Elysian Gardens."[1] Yet, amidst the profuse abundance of his impersonations, he aimed always at preserving the purity of Grecian outline. As he says in his *Ode to Simplicity*:—

    Thou who, with hermit heart,
    Disdainst the wealth of art,
And gauds, and pageant weeds, and trailing pall;
    But com'st a decent maid,
    In *attic robe* arrayed,
O chaste, unboastful Nymph, to thee I call!

Even in his diction the influence of Greek models is apparent; especially in his frequent practice of accumulating epithets without conjunctions. We have phrases like "wide ambitious base," "rich ambitious head," "blest prophetic loins," "shuddering, meek, submitted

[1] *Lives of the Poets: Collins.*

thought," "genial loved return," "gradual dusky veil," reminding us of the exquisite choruses in Sophocles' *Œdipus Coloneus* and in *The Birds* or *The Clouds* of Aristophanes :—

> τὰν ἄβατον θεοῦ
> φυλλάδα μυριόκαρπον ἀνήλιον
> ἀνήνεμόν τε πάντων
> χειμώνων.[1]

Or :—

> ἄγε δὴ φύσιν ἄνδρες ἀμαυρόβιοι, φύλλων γενεᾷ προσόμοιοι,
> ὀλιγοδρανέες, πλάσματα πηλοῦ, σκιοειδέα φῦλ' ἀμενηνά,
> ἀπτῆνες ἐφημέριοι, ταλαοὶ βροτοί, ἀνέρες εἰκελόνειροι,
> πρόσσχετε τὸν νοῦν τοῖς ἀθανάτοις ἡμῖν, τοῖς αἰὲν ἐοῦσι,
> τοῖς αἰθερίοις, τοῖσιν ἀγήρῳς, τοῖς ἄφθιτα μηδομένοισιν.[2]

Or :—

> ἀέναοι Νεφέλαι,
> ἀρθῶμεν φανεραὶ δροσερὰν φύσιν εὐάγητον
> πατρὸς ἀπ' Ὠκεανοῦ βαρυαχέος
> ὑψηλῶν ὀρέων κορυφὰς ἔπι
> δενδροκόμους, ἵνα
> τηλεφανεῖς σκοπιὰς ἀφορώμεθα
> καρπούς τ' ἀρδομέναν ἱερὰν χθόνα
> καὶ ποταμῶν ζαθέων κελαδήματα
> καὶ πόντον κελάδοντα βαρύβρομον.[3]

Gray's manner is fundamentally different. In his odes the ethic or elegiac spirit predominates, and is expressed by the union of substantives with carefully chosen single epithets, and by the antithetical turn of the sentence.[4] This is according to the Latin genius, of which Gray's own verse compositions in that language show that he was full; who, in his *Elegy*, for example, does not feel the stately march of Latin verse?

> Th' applause of listening senates to command,
> The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
> To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
> And read their history in a nation's eyes,

---

[1] Sophocles, *O.C.* 675-678. [2] Aristophanes, *Aves*, 685-689.

[3] Aristophanes, *Nubes*, 275-283.

[4] I do not remember in Gray's Pindaric odes any instance of accumulated epithets, save in the first strophe of *The Progress of Poesy*. There are, of course, several in the *Elegy*: "ancient solitary reign"; "dull cold ear of death"; "purest ray serene"; "dark unfathomed caves"; "mute inglorious Milton"; "cool sequestered vale of life"; "pleasing anxious being"; "longing lingering look."

> Their lot forbade; nor circumscribed alone,
> Their growing virtues, but their crimes confined,
> Forbade to wade through slaughter to a throne,
> And shut the gates of mercy on mankind.
>
> The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,
> To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame,
> Or heap the shrine of Luxury and Pride
> *With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.*

Perhaps the fact that the English temper is more nearly allied to the Roman than to the Greek, joined to the superiority of Gray in point of workmanship, is sufficient to account for the greater popularity which his poems have always enjoyed among his countrymen compared with those of Collins. The complete assimilation of subject and style in the *Elegy*, and the masterly treatment of English history in *The Bard*, are more potent illustrations of the civic tendencies of the Renaissance in England than is the subtle allegory of the *Ode to Liberty.*

I have dwelt at length on the contrasted qualities of Gray and Collins, because they are the two last lyrical poets of England whose art is consciously directed by the genius of the Classical Renaissance. While both of them were by temperament inclined to follow the stream of Romantic tendency, they were so deeply penetrated by Whig traditions, and by the spirit of Greek and Roman literature, that they were able as artists to control the force of their own imaginative emotion But the tide of Romanticism had now risen to a level at which it could no longer be contained within the old barriers. A large section of cultivated English society had familiarised itself with the doctrines of Montesquieu, some even sympathised with those of Rousseau. Groups of *dilettanti*, following out the road opened to them by the two Wartons, were in revolt against the didactic fashions of the previous age, and a host of minor poets, who still coloured their diction with conventional idioms imitated from the Latin, were endeavouring to give expression to Gothic sentiments. The Romantic Movement had, in fact, passed into the

stage of pure Literary Renaissance, so that it becomes now necessary for our History to give some account of the Revivals (1) of Erse Legend; (2) of Scandinavian Mythology; (3) of Mediæval English Metrical Forms.

1. In June 1760 was published a small volume called, *Fragments of Ancient Poetry collected in the Highlands of Scotland and translated from the Gaelic or Erse Language.* It was the work of a young man, James Macpherson (born 27th of October 1736, died February 1796), then acting as tutor in the family of Mr. Graham of Balgowan. Macpherson had shown his performance, before its publication, with seeming reluctance, to John Home, author of *Douglas*, and the latter, delighted with what he took to be a great literary discovery, had laid the translations in 1759 before a council of his learned friends in Edinburgh. Immense enthusiasm was aroused, and on its appearance the book of *Fragments* received applause from many English critics, including Gray, Walpole, and Shenstone. Urged on by the growing excitement of his Scottish patrons, Macpherson undertook to continue his explorations, with the result that in December 1761 he was able to produce *Fingal, an ancient Epic Poem, in Six Books; together with several other Poems, composed by Ossian, the son of Fingal:* while, in March 1763, appeared *Temora, an ancient Epic Poem, in Eight Books; together with several other Poems, composed by Ossian, the son of Fingal.* Both of these epics professed to be translations from the Gaelic. Like the *Fragments* they were welcomed with rapturous applause in Scotland by Blair and his circle; but in England they were roughly denounced, by Johnson and others, as the fabrications of Macpherson himself. After Macpherson's death this denunciation was continued by Malcolm Laing; the defence of *Fingal* and *Temora* being undertaken by Patrick Graham and others; while a committee of the Highland Society, after a long investigation of the whole subject returned an open verdict. The controversy has lingered on into our own times, and Macpherson has found an able and modest champion in Mr. Bailey Saunders, whose conclusion is as follows:

In respect of some of their external features, and of the controversy which they have aroused, the parallel between the Ossianic poems, as Macpherson left them, and the *Nibelungenlied* in the form in which it has come to us from the close of the twelfth century is curiously exact. The matter of both is a mixture of myth and history, and both are based on songs and ballads of uncertain date and origin. In the one and in the other a fresh and alien element is superinduced; in the *Nibelungenlied* the ideas of the age of chivalry refine the gods and heroes of an early mythology: in the Ossianic poems, a literary elegance obscures what was rough and harsh in the old Celtic legends. In either it cannot be determined how much was drawn from ancient lore and how much was added by the collector; but there seems to be as good a case for the authenticity of the Ossianic poems, as for that of the *Edda* or the *Nibelungenlied*; and with the old writers who gave those works to the world, Macpherson is fairly entitled to rank.[1]

I am afraid this is a conclusion which can scarcely be accepted. Setting aside the completely different degrees of antiquity in the several writers, it is plain that there is an essential difference between Snorro Sturleson, together with the poet of the *Nibelungenlied*, and (Mr. Saunders might have added) the author of the *Song of Beowulf*, on the one hand, and Macpherson on the other; the three former are to be considered primarily as inventors, dealing with floating legendary materials, preserved in their own time and in their own language; the latter is professedly a translator. The titles of his translations show that he asserted his works to be, in their Gaelic form, the actual composition of Ossian: if they were not a faithful rendering of this in English, Macpherson intended deliberately to deceive his readers; and the only question is, what was the extent of his fraud. Upon this point the Report of the Highland Society wisely refuses to pronounce: any conclusion we may arrive at must be a purely critical inference; nor is the question indeed of much importance The Ossianic poems are not in any case very marvellous productions. They are *ex hypothesi* addressed to the simple and natural feelings of men in an early stage of society,

[1] *Life and Letters of James Macpherson*, pp. 322-323.

and the language in which they are expressed employs the figurative forms common to the poets of all barbarous nations. Far more interest attaches to the investigation of the causes which made them appeal so strongly to the eighteenth century, and of the means employed by Macpherson in handling his materials.

As regards the spiritual causes that were at work, they were for the most part those which I have classed in this chapter under the name of the Romantic movement: the longing for simplicity and solitude, the tendency to Nature-Worship, the revolt alike against the conventions of town society and the restrictions of the heroic couplet. Added to these was the element of patriotism. It was supposed that a Scottish poet had been discovered, greater—so thought Blair and his Edinburgh friends in their infatuation—than Homer himself. This Scot must, it was believed, have certainly left behind him an epic poem, which it was the duty of his compatriots to discover. How great an impulse was given to Macpherson's invention by this temper of the time appears from Blair's evidence before the committee of the Highland Society:—

> I remember well (says he, speaking of a dinner party given to promote the recovery of the epic) that when the company was about to break up, and I was going away, Mr. Macpherson followed me to the door, and told me that *from the spirit of that meeting*, he now for the first time entertained the hope that the undertaking to which I had so often prompted him would be attended with success; that hitherto he had imagined they were merely romantic ideas which I had held out to him: but he now saw them likely to be realised, and should endeavour to acquit himself so as to give satisfaction to his friends.[1]

Macpherson, in fact, had to play up to the enthusiasm of his audience, and no fitter actor could have been selected for the task. He was a man of genuine gifts; a real capacity for imitative expression appears even in his avowedly original verse; and a taste refined by a sound

[1] *Report of the Highland Society*: cited in Mr. Bailey Saunders' *Life and Letters of James Macpherson*, p. 93.

classical training made him feelingly alive to the influences in the air of his age. Johnson's confidence that he would be unable to produce any MSS. justifying the pretended unity of his Gaelic Epics was well founded. On the other hand, in his wanderings through the Highlands he must have gathered a large store of oral materials. The Bards of the Highland chieftains retained a status and a poetical tradition much superior to those of their degenerate brethren, the English ballad-singers. Among them Macpherson would have heard many songs filled, no doubt, with images derived from rocks, valleys, mountains, streams, moors, mists, and more particularly ghosts; numerous love elegies and lamentations for the dead; frequent allusions to the deeds of the great Celtic hero, Finn MacCumhaill. These would often have been capable of literal rendering; but upon them, as Mr. Saunders allows, "a fresh and alien element is superinduced"; in other words, the unity of form and spirit in the Ossianic poems is derived from Macpherson himself. The judgment and taste he shows in fusing his materials rises almost to genius. Instead of attempting, like some of his predecessors, to make his translation in English verse, he felt intuitively that it ought, in English, to be shaped into metrical prose, and, as Laing suggests, the specimens of Hebrew poetry, given by Louth and repeated by Blair in his lectures, probably furnished him with the required model For the rest his knowledge of the English Bible, together with his fairly wide reading in classical and English literature, gave him all the supplementary images he needed for the refinement of the oral style of the Bards. It is impossible to read his "translations" without perceiving how much they owe, especially in respect of the abundant use of description and simile, to Homer, Milton, Pope, and even Gray. No one, on the other hand, acquainted with the Anglo-Saxon poem on the Death of Byrhtnoth[1] is likely to take the following elaborate battle-piece for the style of narrative peculiar to oral minstrelsy:—

[1] See vol. i. p. 450.

As the dark shades of autumn fly over hills of grass; so gloomy, dark, successive, came the chiefs of Lochlin's echoing woods. Tall as the stag of Morven, moved stately before them the King. His shining shield is on his side, like a flame on the heath at night; when the world is silent and dark, and the traveller sees some ghost sporting in his beam! Dimly gleam the hills around, and show indistinctly their oaks! A blast from the troubled ocean removed the settled mist. The sons of Erin appear like a ridge of rocks on the coast; when mariners on shores unknown are trembling at veering winds!

. . . . . .

As a hundred winds on Morven; as the stream of a hundred hills; as clouds fly successive over heaven; as the dark ocean assails the shore of the desert; so roaring, so vast, so terrible, the armies mixed on Lena's echoing heath. The groan of the people spread over the hills: it was like the thunder of night, when the clouds burst on Cona; and a thousand ghosts shriek at once on the hollow wind.

. . . . . .

Such were our words when Gaul's loud voice came growing on the wind. He waved on high the sword of his father. We rushed to death and wounds. As waves, white bubbling over the deep, come swelling, roaring on; as rocks of ooze meet roaring waves; so foes attacked and fought. Man met with man, and steel with steel. Shields sound and warriors fall. As a hundred hammers on the red son of the furnace, so rose, so rung their swords.

2. The Scandinavian Revival proceeded upon quite different lines. From the days of Snorro Sturleson and Saxo Grammaticus, writers of different kinds had been careful to preserve records of Norse antiquities and legends; but these had produced no effect on the course of English Poetry. Neither Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, nor Milton, makes any use of Scandinavian mythology. The English imagination had, from the early days of the Norman Conquest, been turned so exclusively to the sources of legendary antiquity opened to it by Geoffrey of Monmouth, that the indifference of the nation to its true descent was made a matter of reproach by the antiquary Richard Verstegan.[1] Verstegan discourses quaintly on

[1] He says, "Observing then, withall how diverse of our English writers have been as laborious and serious in their discourses of the Antiquitie of the Brittans as if they properly appertained unto Englishmen, which in nowise they doe or can doe, for that their offsprings and descents are wholly different

Scandinavian mythology, speaking of the "Idols," Woden, Tuysco, Thor, and Friga; but though Milton was no doubt acquainted with his book, these deities make no figure among the gods of the Gentiles enumerated in *Paradise Lost* (Book i. 506-521). They had in fact, as I have already said, been long expelled by the Christian missionaries from popular belief,[1] and for poetical purposes the grimness of Norse legend offered few attractions to minds fed by the Classical Renaissance on the rich beauties of Greek mythology. But for readers whose *ennui* would not yield to the too familiar stories of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* the discovery of the Scandinavian antiquities was in every sense a godsend.

In 1760 Gray was contemplating a History of English Poetry, and had made up his mind to write a chapter on Norse legend. The book from which he chiefly drew his information was Thomas Bartholinus' *Antiquitatum Danicarum de causis Contemptae a Danis adhuc Gentilibus Mortis Libri tres.* This contained two Norse odes, with Latin translations, which Gray adapted in 1761, intending them as specimens for his History;[2] but when he dropped his historical design, he laid his renderings aside. In 1767, however, he determined to insert them in the Edition of his Poems, published by Dodsley, and he wrote to Beattie[3] describing the odes as "two pieces of old Norwegian poetry, in which there was a wild spirit that struck me," while in a letter to Walpole he spoke slightingly of these and his Welsh adaptations as "two ounces of stuff."[4]

. . . Whereby and through the lacke of due distinction between the two nations . . . , our true orignale and honorable Antiquitie lieth involved and obscured, and are remaining ignorant of our owne true ancestors, understand our descent otherwise than it is, deeming it enough for us to heare that Eneas and his Troians, the supposed ancestors of King Bruto and his Brittans, are largely discoursed of." Cited by Mr. Frank Edgar Farley in his *Scandinavian Influences in the English Romantic Movement* (p. 9), an admirable and exhaustive Monograph on the subject in vol. ix. of *Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature* (Boston), to which the reader is referred.

[1] Vol. i. p. 38.

[2] *Scandinavian Influences in the English Romantic Movement*, pp. 34-35.

[3] Letter of 24th December 1767.

[4] Letter of 25th February 1768

Rendered into English, with his usual fine judgment, in verses of seven or eight syllables, Gray's *Fatal Sisters* and *Descent of Odin* at once inspired numerous imitators. Henry Mackenzie, author of *The Man of Feeling*, wrote a metrical introduction to *The Fatal Sisters*, from which the following stanza, apparently suggested by the imagery of *The Bard*, will serve as a specimen of the melodramatic Scandinavianism that soon became fashionable—

Red his eye, that watched the book,
Sealed with many a hero's blood,
With bristling locks and haggard look,
The hoary prophet gazed the flood.

Another proof of the influence of the two odes may also be cited, as it furnishes at the same time a typical example of the fraudulent spirit frequently found among men of letters in the period now under consideration. In 1770 was published a little volume entitled *Poems on Several Occasions by Michael Bruce*, a young Scotsman, who died on the 5th of July 1767. They were edited by Bruce's friend, John Logan, and among them was the well-known *Ode to the Cuckoo*, which was for some time generally, and no doubt rightly, regarded as the work of Bruce. The editor, however, had prefixed to the volume the following dishonest note:—

To make up a miscellany, some pieces, wrote by different authors, are inserted, all of them original, and none of them destitute of merit. The reader of taste will easily distinguish them from those of Mr. Bruce, without their being particularised by any mark.

No poems by Bruce having been before published, it was impossible to say certainly which of the contents of the volume were his, and it was therefore obviously open to Logan (who had got possession of all Bruce's MSS.) to claim any of the pieces he had edited which might be received with favour by the public. This he did in a volume of poems, published in 1781, which opens with the charming *Ode to the Cuckoo*. Among the poems published in 1770 were two *Danish Odes*, which,

being evidently inspired by *The Fatal Sisters* and *The Descent of Odin*, can hardly be supposed to have been written by Bruce, who died before Gray's odes appeared in print. Logan himself did not at once pretend to the authorship of the *Danish Odes* by inserting them in his volume of 1781: he may have thought it unsafe to claim as his own all the compositions of merit which had originally appeared after the name of his friend; but they were asserted to be his by one of his executors, the Rev. Thomas Robertson, and since no one else besides Bruce has been mentioned as their possible author, it cannot be said they are not Logan's. In any case they illustrate, both by their imitative style and by the enthusiasm with which they were received, the attitude of the age towards the Scandinavian Revival. One of them opens as follows:—

The great, the glorious deed is done!
The foe is fled! the field is won!
Prepare the feast, the heroes call;
Let joy, let triumph fill the hall!

The raven claps his sable wings;
The bard his chosen timbrel brings;
Six virgins round, a select choir,
Sing to the music of his lyre.

With mighty ale the goblet crown;
With mighty ale your sorrows drown;
To-day to mirth and joy we yield;
To-morrow, face the bloody field.

From danger's front, at battle's eve,
Sweet comes the banquet to the brave;
Joy shines with genial beam on all,
The joy that dwells in Odin's hall.

The fact that these odes were not translations, but imitations, of the Scandinavian manner points to the progress of the Revival since the appearance of *The Fatal Sisters* and *The Descent of Odin*; and Nathan Drake, writing on the subject thirty years after that date, defines the feeling then prevalent in the public mind:—

What (he asks) can exceed the thrilling horror of Gray's celebrated Odes from the Norse, which first opened to English poetry a mine of the most wild yet terrific mythology? Since their appearance the fictions of the Edda have been seized upon with more freedom and avidity.[1]

Evidently the jaded taste of Drake's contemporaries required to be stimulated by an agreeable "thrill of horror"; and it is amusing to observe how long this sensation depended on the fancy that one of the enjoyments of the Scandinavian paradise was to drink out of the skulls of their enemies.

The funny mistake (observes Vigfusson), which led Bishop Percy and his copiers down to this very day to entertain the belief that the "Heroes hoped in Odin's hall to drink beer out of the skulls of their slain foes," has its origin in a misinterpretation of the phrase *biug-viðum hausa* by Ole Worm, who says, "Sperabant Heroes se in Aula Othini bibituros ex craniis eorum quos occiderant."[2]

Vigfusson says that the meaning of the original Norse is, "We shall soon be quaffing ale out of the crooked skull-boughs (horns) in the splendid house of Odin,"[3] a statement which would scarcely have sufficed to "thrill" the languid veins of civil society. In point of fact, the newly discovered Norse myths, as such, did little to stimulate original poetic invention, for, till the appearance of Sayer's *Dramatic Sketches of Northern Mythology* in 1790, almost all the efforts of the bards of the Revival were concentrated on the *translation* of five fine fragments of Norse poetry, first published by Percy in 1760, from materials largely derived out of the Chevalier Mallet's book, *L'Introduction a l'histoire de Dannemarc*. Most of the minor poets of the period, including Mathias, Miss Seward, and Matthew Gregory ("Monk") Lewis, tried their hands, with various degrees of success, at translating them, but their inspiration was of an entirely artificial kind; and indeed the quality of the treasure that the "mine of wild yet terrific

[1] *Literary Hours*, ii. 73.

[2] Cited in *Scandinavian Influences in the English Romantic Movement*, p. 62.

[3] *Ibid.* p. 62.

mythology" yielded to English Poetry at this epoch may be divined from the tamely didactic verses of Hayley on the subject; who says, addressing Mason:—

Thy modest Gray, solicitous to pierce
The dark and distant source of modern verse,
By strings untried, first taught his English Lyre
To reach the Gothic Harp's terrific fire:
The North's wild spectres own his potent hand,
And Hell's nine portals at his voice expand;
With new existence by his verse endued,
See Gothic Fable wakes her shadowy brood,
Which, in the Runic rhymes of many a Scald,
With pleasing dread our Northern sires appalled.[1]

3. The revival of Ossian and of Scandinavian Mythology served as nutriment for the tastes encouraged in poetry by the criticism of Joseph Warton; but a more really vital movement was effected, along the path first opened by his brother Thomas, through the revival of Mediæval Forms of English verse. And here the subject branches off again into two divisions; one relating to the increased popularity of the Ballad metre, mainly due to the publication of Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*; the other to the *Rowley Poems* of Chatterton.

Beyond all the forms of early romantic poetry the Ballad had preserved an influence over the cultivated imagination of the English people The old ballad of "Chevy Chase" had roused the heart of Philip Sidney, trained as he was in all the culture of the Italian Renaissance, "like a trumpet"; it had been praised also by the refined pen of Addison in *The Spectator*.[2] Another ballad, *William and Margaret*, fraudulently claimed by David Mallet as his own composition, was enthusiastically noticed in *The Plain Dealer* by Aaron Hill.[3] This appreciation of the ballad, in an age dominated by classical form, was the result of the vitality lingering in the art of minstrelsy. Though in a very

[1] *Essay on Epic Poetry.* [2] *Spectator*, No. 70.
[3] *Plain Dealer* for August 28, 1724 For an account of Mallet's fraud see Phelps' *Beginnings of the English Romantic Movement.* Appendix II.

depressed condition, the ministrel in England still plied a scanty trade; while in Scotland a comparatively simple mode of life, and the abiding memories of Border warfare in feudal times, afforded more abundant materials to the professors of the art. The Act of Union, and the jealousies aroused by it between North and South Britain, helped to put new life into the ballad, and Scottish poets of aristocratic station and classical culture obtained reputation by the success with which they imitated the ancient manner of oral ministrelsy.

This patriotic movement was promoted by Allan Ramsay, whose pastoral songs in the Scottish dialect have been already noticed. In Ramsay's *Tea Table Miscellany* (1724) were published two ballads of great poetical merit, one, the spirited *Hardyknute*, the other, *The Braes of Yarrow* by William Hamilton of Bangour (1704-54), whose voluminous verse in the English idiom is almost entirely wanting in character and distinction. This latter ballad is said by the author to be written "in imitation of the ancient Scottish manner"; and indeed he has caught most admirably the wild pathos and the abrupt energy of narrative that are the distinguishing marks of the best ballad style.[1] The following dialogue between a newly married Scottish maiden and her bridegroom who has slain her lover, will serve to illustrate the exquisite strain of poetry in this composition:—

A. Did I not warn thee not to luve,
And warn from fight? but to my sorrow,
O'er rashly bauld a stronger arm
Thou met'st and fell on the Braes o' Yarrow.

Sweet smells the birk, green grows, green grows the grass,
Yellow on Yarrow's braes the gowan;
Fair hangs the apple frae the rock,
Sweet the wave of Yarrow flowan.

B Flows Yarrow sweet? as sweet, as sweet flows Tweed,
As green its grass, its gowan as yellow,
As sweet smells on its braes the birk,
The apple frae the rock as mellow.

[1] See vol. i. p. 461.

Fair was thy luve, fair, fair indeed thy luve:
  In flowery bánds thou didst him fetter:
Though he was fair and well-beloved again,
  Than me he never loved thee better.

Busk ye then, busk, my bonny bonny bride,
  Busk ye, busk ye, my winsome marrow:
Busk ye and lo'e me on the banks o' Tweed,
  And think nae mair on the Braes o' Yarrow.

A. How can I busk a bonny, bonny bride?
  How can I busk a winsome marrow?
How lo'e him on the banks o' Tweed,
  That slew my luve on the Braes o' Yarrow?

O Yarrow fields! may never never rain,
  No dew thy tender blossoms cover;
For there was basely slain my luve;
  My luve, as he had not been a lover.

The boy put on his robes, his robes of green,
  His purple veil,—'twas my awn sewing.
Ah wretched me! I little little kenned
  He was in these to meet his ruin!

The boy took out his milk-white, milk-white steed,
  Unheedful of my dole and sorrow;
But ere the toofal of the night
  He lay a corpse on the Braes o' Yarrow.

From the genuine inspiration of this most beautiful poem,[1] it will be seen that the revival of the Ballad style in the latter part of the eighteenth century was not due solely to the enthusiasm aroused by the publication in 1765 of Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry.* But the taste encouraged by that famous book was a prime factor in the Romantic Movement; and ballads like W. J. Mickle's (1735-1788) *Cumnor Hall*, and Lady Anne

[1] The readiness with which the manner of the old ballads could be imitated, as illustrated in *The Braes of Yarrow*, furnishes a comment on some of the points raised by Mr. Andrew Lang, who, in *Blackwood's Magazine*, September 1895, very ingeniously argues for the antiquity of the famous ballad, *Mary Hamilton*, against the view I have put forward in vol. i. pp. 461-468 of this Histor[illegible]
I cannot think that [illegible]
to rely are of suffic[illegible]
the details of the [illegible]
accepted by Professc[illegible]

Lindsay's (1750-1825) *Auld Robin Gray* must be considered as the immediate antecedents of the Lake School.

As regards the Rowley Forgeries a brief account of them will suffice. Thomas Chatterton was the posthumous son of Thomas Chatterton, and was born at Bristol on the 20th of November 1752. His father, who was one of a family that had long held the office of sexton of St. Mary Redcliffe, Bristol, was master of a Free School close by the Church, from the Muniment Room of which he was in the habit of abstracting many parchments, which he used for covering school-books and other common purposes. Till he was six years old young Chatterton appeared to be rather deficient in understanding, but at that age, happening to see his mother destroying one of the parchments collected by her late husband, his attention was arrested by the illuminated capitals, and at once his whole nature seemed to be awakened. He learned with readiness, became a voracious reader of all the books that fell in his way, and carried off to his own garret whatever MSS. he could discover. In this way he gained an early acquaintance with the antiquities of his native city, and by constant experiments learned how to imitate the appearance of the ancient parchments. When he was about eight years old he was sent to Colston's Hospital, the Bristol Blue Coat School, where he seems to have hated the course of an education that took him away from his favourite pursuits. He made friends, however, among his school-fellows and developed an affection for Thomas Phillips, usher in the school and a man with some taste for literature, whose death in 1769 Chatterton has lamented in an Elegy. Through Phillips he seems to have obtained in 1764 the ear of the editor of a local newspaper,[1] in which appeared two of his earliest poems, one being of a religious, the other of a satirical character.[2]

The idea of the Rowley fabrication appears to have

[1] Felix Farley's *Bristol Journal*.
[2] *On the Last Epiphany*: *The Churchwarden and the Apparition*.

taken shape in Chatterton's mind in 1765. According to his story, Thomas Rowley, parish priest of St. John's Church, friend and client of William Canyng, Mayor of Bristol in the reigns of Henry VI. and Edward IV., left behind him compositions both in prose and verse which were discovered by Chatterton among the muniments of St. Mary Redcliffe. The first of these which he submitted to view was—by the evidence of Chatterton's school-fellow, Thistlethwaite—*Elenoure and Juga*, a pastoral Eclogue. This he showed to Phillips, and finding that, so far from exciting in him any suspicion, it had awakened his keenest interest, he proceeded to practise on the vanity of Henry Burgum, a pewterer in the town, by showing him some fictitious parchments, which established his right to bear arms as a member of the noble, but imaginary, family of De Bergham. Gaining confidence from the success of his experiments, he next made the acquaintance of William Barrett, a surgeon and antiquary of Bristol, who was engaged in writing a history of the city; and upon him he palmed off, as copies of the work of Rowley, a number of documents, the contents of which Barrett unsuspectingly incorporated in his own work.

In July 1767 Chatterton was, according to the custom of the school, apprenticed to Mr. John Lambert, an attorney. Lambert's business not being a large one, the lad had time to pursue his studies during office hours; and in this position he continued to work, without any apparent neglect of his duties, for nearly three years. But, as may be supposed, his tasks as a lawyer's copyist were extremely irksome to him, and it was his constant ambition to find a larger sphere of literary work. He endeavoured to emancipate himself at first by the patronage of George Catcott, partner of Henry Burgum, to whom he sold copies of the supposed ancient *Tragedy of Ælla* and other of the Rowley documents. He also corresponded with the editors of some London papers, and endeavoured, vainly, to persuade Dodsley to publish *Ælla*. Finally he wrote to Horace Walpole, enclosing

a copy of the ode beginning "Harte of Lyone shake thie sworde," together with a transcript from a supposed original MS. entitled *The Ryse of Peyncteynge yn Englande, wroten by T. Rowleie, 1469, for Mastre Canynge.* To this he added explanatory notes, asking Walpole to correct any mistakes that he might find.

Walpole, at first deceived like all the Bristol antiquaries, sent him a courteous reply, which encouraged Chatterton to explain to him his position in life, and his desire to be relieved from his necessities; at the same time he enclosed a copy of another MS. entitled *Historie of Peyncters yn Englande, bie T. Rowley.* With suspicions now aroused, Walpole sent this and the other documents to Gray and Mason, who immediately pronounced them to be modern fabrications; and Walpole accordingly wrote to Chatterton advising him to persevere in his profession till he should have made money enough to indulge his literary tastes. Despairing of getting free by any other means, Chatterton now resolved to make his master dismiss him, and after secretly bringing several letters under his notice which might suggest to Lambert that he was mad, he left in the office a copy of an eccentric Will, dated the 14th of April 1770, in which he announced his approaching suicide. This, when found, produced on Lambert the effect that Chatterton desired; the poet's indentures were immediately cancelled, and he himself came to London with a small amount of money subscribed by his Bristol acquaintance.

At this period the agitation about Wilkes was at its height, and Chatterton soon gained admission to the newspapers on the popular side by writing letters in which he copied the style of "Junius." When public enthusiasm for the demagogue began to cool, he offered to write on the side of the Government, but the market for political pamphlets soon vanished, and Chatterton was forced to seek literary employment of a more general kind. He composed a musical Burlesque called *The Revenge*, which was acted, just after his death, at Marylebone Gardens, and for which he received five guineas; he sent also to

different magazines a great number of essays and other compositions. For these he was promised payment to the amount of eleven guineas, but in the meantime his little stock of ready money was exhausted. He tried again to make profit out of his Rowley transcripts, but without success. As a last resource, he resolved to seek employment as a ship's surgeon, and applied for a certificate of qualification to Barrett, who, however, refused to give it to him. Being now left without any means of livelihood, he determined to commit suicide, and after writing the lines beginning "Farewell, Bristolia's dingy piles of brick," he poisoned himself by arsenic in his lodgings at Brook Street, Holborn, on the 24th of August 1770.

"This youth," says Warton, "who died at eighteen, was a prodigy of genius, and would have proved the first of English poets had he reached a maturer age." That Chatterton was a prodigy of genius is shown by his great versatility and by what he actually accomplished in the way of imitation before his early death; the extent to which he anticipated the later metrical experiments of Coleridge and Keats is almost miraculous. But that he would have reached the place assigned to him in English Poetry by Warton seems to me a much more questionable proposition. The chief qualities exhibited in his remains are, first, a marvellous precocity in the satiric observation of character; next, an equally astonishing power of imitating other men's thoughts in his own style; finally, an extraordinary facility in metrical expression. On the other hand, his earliest compositions are wanting in those touches of thought found in the work of poets who have rivalled him in juvenile precocity—Cowley's story of *Pyramus and Thisbe*, for example, or Pope's *Ode to Solitude*—which clearly indicate a future capacity of development along a line of original invention. Chatterton's earliest work shows that he had caught the spirit and style of Gay from reading his *Fables*, just as his later Satires are clever reproductions of the different styles of Dryden, Pope, and Churchill, fused in a manner of his own, and applied to his own surroundings. By means of what he read he was able to express

fluently his contempt for the narrow provincial intellects upon whose credulity he was accustomed to practise; but there is no glimpse in his easy verse of larger horizons, none of the intellectual struggle characteristic of a poet like Oldham, "by too much force betrayed." In the same way he could reproduce the style of "Junius" with sufficient effect to make his pen of value to the partisans of Wilkes; but it is evident that his political letters signed "Probus" and "Decimus" and his satire called *Kew Gardens* are only the products of an imitative indignation.

His real originality is shown—though not by the artistic skill which he imagined himself to have displayed in producing them—in his Rowley fabrications.

> The poems (says Professor Skeat) exhibit a phraseology such as no human ingenuity can translate into fifteenth-century English without completely recasting them. The metres are mostly wrong, the rimes are sometimes faulty, the words are wrongly coined, or have the wrong number of syllables, and the phrases often involve anachronisms, or occasionally plagiarisms. Yet for all this Chatterton coined a language which he so far mastered as to be able to employ it with considerable ease and skill, whilst at the same time it was sufficiently archaic in its general appearance to delude the great mass of readers at the period at which he wrote, and a good many since that time.[1]

It is wonderful that a scholar like Warton, acquainted with the poems of Lydgate, should have hesitated for a moment (as he seems to have done) about the genuineness of the Rowley poems; that he should have thought it possible for compositions such as those of which I have given examples[2] in the first volume of this History to provoke a challenge from a man who, in the fifteenth century, could write the *Songe to Ælle*, beginning thus:

> Oh thou, or what remaynes of thee,
> Ælle, the darling of futuritie,
> Lette thys mie song bolde as thie courage bee,
> As everlastynge to posteritie;

[1] *Poetical Works of Thomas Chatterton* (1875), vol. ii. pp. xi.-xii.
[2] See vol. i. pp. 326-333.

II

Whanne Dacya's sonnes whose hayres of bloude-redde hue,
Lyche Kynge-cuppe brastynge with the mornynge due,[1]
Arranged yn dreare arraie
Upone the lethale daie,
Spredd far and wyde on Watchett's shore:
Then dydst thou furiouse stonde,
And bie thie brondeous honde
Besprengedd all the lees with gore.

As a mere imitator, Chatterton was incapable of preserving even the appearance of a consistently antique style. For example, the first section in his *Parliament of Sprites*—called *Introduction by Queen Mab*—is mainly made up of old words put together out of the dictionaries he consulted, and runs as follows:—

When from the earth the sun's hulstrèd,[2]
Then from the flowerets straught[3] with dew,
My liegemen make you awhapèd,[4]
And witches then their witchcraft do.
Then rise the sprites ugsome and rou,[5]
And take their walk the churchyard through.

But in section XXX., where the sprite of Fitz-Hardynge speaks, he writes:—

But thou the builder of this pleasant place,
Where all the saints in sweet adjunction stand,
A very heaven for its beauteous grace,
The glory and the wonder of the land,
That shows the builder's mind and former's hand
To be the best that on the earth remains,
At once for wonder and delight command,
Showing how much he of the god retains,
Cannynge the great, the charitable, the good,
Noble as kings, if not kingly blood.[6]

Here is the hand of genius. In this latter passage it is

[1] Chatterton is here evidently imitating Collins in his *Ode to Liberty*:—

The youths whose locks divinely spreading
Like vernal hyacinths in sullen hue, etc.

[2] Hidden. [3] Stretched. [4] Amazed. [5] Ugly and terrible.
[6] In both sections I have followed the mode of orthography adopted by Skeat.

plain that Chatterton's poetical enthusiasm for the antiquities of his native city has overborne the cold effort to produce an archaic effect with which he opened his composition. Had this poet lived in an age of spontaneous inspiration when the stage was flourishing, it may well be that the needs of the public taste would have guided his dramatic and satiric genius into some channel of great poetical expression. But cast as his lot was in a period rather of criticism than of creation, while all the political aims of national action were dark and ambiguous, and all the springs of poetical invention seemed to be running low, it is difficult to see in what direction he could have turned his powers. He was urged on by a boundless ambition, but his actual performances show no sign of a definite purpose in art. He turned, as the wind blew, from poetical forgeries to political pamphleteering; from that to hack-writing for the stage; and when all other resources failed him, he was prepared to undertake the duties of a ship's surgeon, though he knew nothing of medical science beyond what he had learned from the quickness of superficial observation. The pity and the tragedy of his life and early death lie in the apparent waste of such extraordinary gifts, for want of any duct of communication between the genius of the poet and the social conditions of his age.

In a certain sense the Rowley forgeries are a typical result of the Romantic Movement in English Poetry during the eighteenth century. By the middle of that century the force of the Classical Renaissance, which operated with energy in our poetry through the century and a half that (roughly speaking) elapsed between the death of Spenser and the death of Pope, had exhausted its effects. Then began the mediæval reaction. At first the reviving spirit of feudal antiquity clothed itself instinctively in such semi-classic forms as may be seen in Allan Ramsay's *Gentle Shepherd.* But in a very short time Romanticism, having established a foothold in public sympathy, began to treat the sovereign Classicism as a usurper. Society, the Romantic critics said, was over-civilised; Poetry, by

taking an ethical and didactic turn, had been diverted into wrong paths: it was necessary to simplify manners by a return to the State of Nature, to galvanise poetry into life by a revival of lyric enthusiasm.

Romanticism of this kind was of course the antipodes of the spirit which breathes in the mediæval romances, which animates the dramas of Shakespeare, which survives in an exaggerated form even in the plays of the Restoration period. In the romance of those times, mingling with the spirit of the Renaissance, we feel the presence of a driving force acting on the imagination, and derived from the chivalrous traditions and the feudal institutions which still contended with civil liberty for the control of the national life. But the political conflict had now been ended by a constitutional compromise. Far from wishing to disturb that settlement, the Romantic critics desired to enjoy the advantages of civil order, but at the same time to indulge the imagination in all its ancient liberty. Their attempts to revive the past produced an atmosphere of artificial sentiment which tended to find an escape in literary forgery. The falsetto note is easily recognisable in the Ossianic "simplicities" of Macpherson and in the Scandinavian "wildness" of Mathias. Such work has the same stamp as the "Gothic" of Strawberry Hill or the supernaturalism of *The Castle of Otranto.* Chatterton's poetical forgeries, while in some respects resembling the others, stand on a higher level, owing to the enthusiasm and genius of their author. Tested by the truth of things, his poetical structures crumble into dust immediately they are examined, but the sense of beauty that pervades them is a genuine proof of the spiritual life that remains in the mediæval institutions of the country, and of the necessity of finding for it some outlet of imaginative expression

Among the immediate pioneers of the Romantic movement in English poetry Gray and Collins alone are entitled to be considered great constructive artists. Both of them were men of strong natural sense. Both recognised the impossibility of restoring a past which in sentiment

they regretted. Both, on the other hand, were eager to extend the bounds of culture and imagination, as far as was possible, by scientific study. Hence they were able to use the forms of classic English diction which they had inherited from their predecessors to express the romantic love of the past which they breathed in the atmosphere of their own age. And accordingly, when the force of the French Revolution imparted a shock of genuine emotion to the whole system of English society, the classico-romantic lyrical forms employed by Gray and Collins afforded instruments of expression easily capable of enlargement by the two poets whose genius was most stimulated by the active energy of that Revolution Byron and Shelley.

CHAPTER XIII

THE POETICAL DRAMA IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

THOMAS SOUTHERNE; WILLIAM CONGREVE, EDMUND SMITH; AMBROSE PHILIPS; JOSEPH ADDISON; NICHOLAS ROWE; EDWARD YOUNG; ELIJAH FENTON; JOHN GAY; HENRY BROOKE.

IN respect of the productiveness of the poetical drama the eighteenth century in England is a barren time; and thos who have followed the course of this History will hav little difficulty in understanding why a stage which, fo two centuries, presented more various and representativ features than any other in Europe should, at this period have sunk into such deep decline. The drama was n longer an instrument capable of giving expression to th spiritual life and activity of the nation. I have shown how in the early part of the sixteenth century, the Moralitie became the vehicle for representing English ideas abou religious liberty and national manners, and how, whe this form of art failed to expand itself sufficiently for al the needs of the popular imagination, it gave place, on th one hand, to the romantic drama of Marlowe and Shake speare, and, on the other, to the more classical form o drama constructed by Ben Jonson; how, during the year preceding the Civil War, the dramatic taste of the Court formed, more or less, upon Spanish models, supplanted o the stage the taste of the people; and how the mountin tide of Puritanism at last caused the closing of the theatre by order of the Long Parliament.

After the Restoration the riot and debauch of th

Royalist reaction gave a certain character to the plays encouraged by the Court; but the compromise of Constitutional Liberty in 1688 was not favourable, either to the old extravagance of romantic action, or to the unrestrained exhibition of licentious manners. It is interesting to watch the stages of degeneracy through which the moribund poetic drama passed; its occasional flashes of vivacity, caused by gusts of party spirit, help to illumine the political history of England up to the fall of Walpole, after which event the poetry of the stage may be said to be completely extinct. But these things call for only brief notice, and I shall therefore content myself with recording such characteristic features in the plays and playwrights of the first half of the eighteenth century as seem to illustrate the general movement of imagination. The phases through which the decadence may be said to have passed are (1) the dwindling of the various motives of representation that inspired the Caroline drama, noticeable in the plays of Southerne and *The Mourning Bride* of Congreve; (2) the acclimatisation of the style of the French drama, illustrated by such tragedies as Smith's *Phædra and Hippolytus*, Ambrose Philips' *Distrest Mother*, and Addison's *Cato*; (3) The attempted revival of the style of the old English drama, as in Rowe's *Fair Penitent* and *Jane Shore*, Young's *Revenge* and Fenton's *Mariamne*; (4) The combination of Opera and Comedy exemplified by *The What d'ye Call It* and *The Beggars' Opera* of Gay; (5) The expiring fire of political allegory, visible in the suppressed *Gustavus Vasa* of Henry Brooke.

(1) It is a mistake to suppose that the Revolution of 1688 at once accomplished, not only a great change in the political government of the country, but also a reformation in its morals and manners. How very differently things actually happened is shown by the fact that all Congreve's comedies, and many of Vanbrugh's and Farquhar's, were produced on the stage during the reign of William III. No doubt the sobriety of William's Court, joined to the personal influence of Queen Mary, did something towards the edification of a new public opinion, but

it was not till 1698, when Collier published his *Short View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage*, that the change in the temper of theatrical audiences was finally revealed. Fashionable society was completely permeated by the habits and ideas of the Caroline era, and the stricter morals of the middle classes, coloured with the doctrines of Puritanism, had not yet had time to assert their influence in the new social equilibrium. Nevertheless, on examining the various tragedies of Southerne and the single one of Congreve, we find that the dramatic temperature has fallen considerably since the heyday of Dryden and Mrs. Afra Behn.

Thomas Southerne was born at Oxmantown, near Dublin, in 1660. He was educated at Trinity College, Dublin, which he entered in 1676, but he did not take his M.A. degree till 1696. In 1678 he entered the Middle Temple; and his first play, *The Loyal Brother*, was acted at Drury Lane as early as 1682. Most of his dramas, however, were produced after the Revolution of 1688, and amongst these the most successful were *The Fatal Marriage* (1694), *Oroonoko* (1699); and *The Spartan Dame* (1704). In his time he seems to have been almost the most popular of post-Revolution playwrights, but in 1726 he had outlived his reputation, and his *Money the Mistress*, acted at the Theatre Royal in Lincoln's Inn Fields, was as hopelessly damned as Ben Jonson's *New Inn* had been just a hundred years before. Southerne took his disappointment more meekly than his eminent predecessor, and continued to live on amiable terms with all his contemporaries. In 1742 he was entertained at a dinner given by Lord Orrery, in honour of his eighty-first birthday, which was graced with some verses by Pope, who spoke of him as

> Tom, by Heaven brought down to raise
> The price of prologues and of plays.

The allusion is to a prologue by Dryden, written for Southerne's *Loyal Brother*, for which when the dramatist was about to pay the usual fee of five guineas Dryden

demanded ten. "Not," he added, "that I mean any disrespect to you, young man; but I understand that the price of plays has risen." Southerne had in fact secured better terms for playwrights, by demanding and obtaining the profits of the second and third night's performance, and for some of his dramas he is said to have received as much as £600. He died on the 22nd of May 1746. Gray, who speaks of him as a most agreeable old man, in spite of his loss of memory,[1] was an admirer of his two best plays, *The Fatal Marriage* and *Oroonoko.*

These tragedies are constructed on the lines introduced by Dryden, that is to say, with a tragic plot for the main action, and a comic underplot (not necessarily connected after Shakespeare's manner with the main plot) suited to the bad taste of a portion of the audience. *The Fatal Marriage* in its main plot has something of the pathos of Otway's *Orphan*, the action being domestic, and founded on a novel by Afra Behn, called *The Fair Vow Breaker.* The heroine, Isabella, whose husband is supposed to have been killed in the wars, being refused any support by her stern father-in-law, who has disapproved of his son's marriage, is rescued by a former devoted suitor, whom she reluctantly agrees to marry. After the marriage has been completed her first husband returns. The language of the play is very simple and pathetic, as the two following passages will show: in the one, Isabella expresses her despair at her helpless position: in the other, Biron, her returned husband, has just discovered the fact of her second marriage:—

Provide us bread and bring a short reprieve,
To put off the bad day of beggary,
That will come on too soon. Take care of it·
Manage it as the last remaining friend,
That would relieve us. [*Exit nurse.*] Heaven can only tell
Where we shall find another—My dear boy!
The labour of his birth was lighter to me,
Than of my fondness now; my fears for him
Are more, than in that hour of hovering death,
They could be for myself.—He minds me not.
His little sports have taken up his thoughts:
O may they never feel the pangs of mine!
Thinking will make me mad: why must I think,
When no thought brings me comfort?[1]

And

BIRON. I know enough; the important question
Of life or death, fearful to be resolved,
Is clear to me: I see where it must end;
And need enquire no more—pray let me have
Pen, ink, and paper; I must write awhile,
And then I'll try to rest—to rest! for ever [*Exit nurse*]
Poor Isabella! now I know the cause,
The cause of thy distress, and cannot wonder
That it has turned thy brain. If I look back
Upon thy loss it will distract me too
O! any curse but this might be removed!
But 'twas the rancorous malignity
Of all ill stars combined, of heaven, and fate,
To put it quite out of their mercies' reach,
To speak peace to us· if they could repent,
They cannot help us now. Alas! I rave
Why do I tax the stars, or heaven, or fate?
They are all innocent of driving us
Into despair; they have not urged my doom.
My father and my brother are my fates,
That drive me to my ruin. They knew well
I was alive; too well they knew how dear
My Isabella—O, my wife no more!
How dear her love was to me—yet they stood
With a malicious silent joy, stood by,
And saw her give up all my happiness,
The treasure of her beauty, to another;
Stood by, and saw her married to another.
O cruel father! and unnatural brother!
Shall I not tell you that you have undone me?
I have but to accuse you of my wrongs,

[1] *The Fatal Marriage*, Act ii. Sc. ii.

demanded ten. "Not," he added, "that I mean any disrespect to you, young man; but I understand that the price of plays has risen." Southerne had in fact secured better terms for playwrights, by demanding and obtaining the profits of the second and third night's performance, and for some of his dramas he is said to have received as much as £600. He died on the 22nd of May 1746. Gray, who speaks of him as a most agreeable old man, in spite of his loss of memory,[1] was an admirer of his two best plays, *The Fatal Marriage* and *Oroonoko.*

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ISABELLA. 'Tis very well——
So; poverty at home and debts abroad!
My present fortune bad; my hopes yet worse!
What will become of me!—
This ring is all I've left of value now:
'Twas given me by my husband; his first gift
Upon our marriage: I have always kept it,
With my best care, the treasure next my life;
Which only can be dearer. Take it, nurse,
'Twill stop the cries of hunger for a time;

[1] Letter to Horace Walpole of September 1737.

Provide us bread and bring a short reprieve,
To put off the bad day of beggary,
That will come on too soon. Take care of it·
Manage it as the last remaining friend,
That would relieve us [*Exit nurse.*] Heaven can only tell
Where we shall find another—My dear boy!
The labour of his birth was lighter to me,
Than of my fondness now; my fears for him
Are more, than in that hour of hovering death,
They could be for myself.—He minds me not.
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Is clear to me: I see where it must end;
And need enquire no more—pray let me have
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And then I'll try to rest—to rest! for ever [*Exit nurse*]
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The cause of thy distress, and cannot wonder
That it has turned thy brain. If I look back
Upon thy loss it will distract me too.
O! any curse but this might be removed!
But 'twas the rancorous malignity
Of all ill stars combined, of heaven, and fate,
To put it quite out of their mercies' reach,
To speak peace to us. if they could repent,
They cannot help us now. Alas! I rave.
Why do I tax the stars, or heaven, or fate?
They are all innocent of driving us
Into despair; they have not urged my doom,
My father and my brother are my fates,
That drive me to my ruin They knew well
I was alive; too well they knew how dear
My Isabella—O, my wife no more!
How dear her love was to me—yet they stood

. . . .

Stood by, and saw her married to another.
O cruel father! and unnatural brother!
Shall I not tell you that you have undone me?
I have but to accuse you of my wrongs,

[1] *The Fatal Marriage*, Act ii. Sc. ii.

And then to fall forgotten—Sleep or death
Sits heavy on me, and benumbs my pains:
Either is welcome, but the hand of death
Works always sure, and best can close my eyes.[1]

Oroonoko, on the other hand, is a romantic tragedy (also founded on a novel of Mrs. Behn's), in which is represented the magnanimous life and death of an Indian prince, who has somehow become a slave in Surinam to English planters, and is joined in that unhappy condition by his betrothed Imoinda, from whom he has long been parted. Their adventures are of the French school of romance, the improbability of them being emphasised by the realism of the underplot, which is intended to be comic, but is only disgusting. Though in its own day, and for long afterwards, this play was found very moving on the stage, it seems to me greatly inferior to *The Fatal Marriage*, and must have owed its success entirely to the charms of the actresses who took the part of Imoinda.

The Spartan Dame is an example of yet another variety of the Caroline drama—namely, the political allegory like Crowne's *Fall of Jerusalem* and Dryden's *Duke of Guise*. The author gives the following account of its origin:—

This tragedy was begun a year before the Revolution, and near four acts written without any view, but upon the subject, which I took from the *Life of Agis* in Plutarch. Many things interfering with those times, I laid by what I had written for seventeen years. I showed it then to the late Duke of Devonshire, who was in every regard a judge; he told me he saw no reason why it might not have been acted the year of the Revolution. I then finished it, and, as I thought, cut out the exceptionable parts, but could not get it acted, not being able to persuade myself to the cutting off of those limbs which I thought essential to the strength and life of it. But since I found it must pine in obscurity without it, I consented to the operation; and after the amputation of every line, very near the number of four hundred, it stands on its own legs still, and by the favour of the town, and indulgent assistance of friends, has come successfully forward upon the stage.

When the play was printed, Southerne replaced the lines he had excised, marking them with inverted commas,

[1] *The Fatal Marriage*, Act v. Sc. i.

and from these it is plain that, if the Duke of Devonshire ever made the remark ascribed to him by the poet, he must have been much less of a Whig than is generally supposed. The play was obviously written from the Legitimist point of view, and was no doubt put on the stage in view of the Tory reaction in the first years of Queen Anne's reign. It proved amazingly successful, and Elijah Fenton who, as a Nonjuror, warmly sympathised with its sentiments addressed to Southerne a poetical epistle in which he said:—

> Our poets only practise on the pit
> With florid lines and trifling turns of wit.
> Howe'er 'tis well the present times can boast,
> The race of Charles's reign not wholly lost.
> Thy scenes, immortal in their worth, shall stand
> Among the chosen classics of our land:
> And whilst our sons are by tradition taught
> How Barry spoke what thou and Otway wrote,
> They'll think it praise to relish and repeat,
> And own thy works inimitably great.

Beyond its political significance *The Spartan Dame* has no merit: the author has evidently wavered between two intentions, one to excite the male portion of his audience with party politics, and the other to interest the female spectators in the fate of one of the heroines, who is placed in the same situation as Lucretia, the victim of Sextus Tarquinius. The action is ill-constructed, and the characters indistinctly drawn, if the success of the play was due to anything but party spirit, it must have been the good acting of Mrs. Barry, in the part of Celona, or in that of Thelamia.

William Congreve is mainly known by his prose comedies, which, of course, fall beyond the scope of this History, but, as the author of *The Mourning Bride*, he may be said to occupy a characteristic place in the progress of the poetical drama. He was the son of William Congreve of Bardsey Grange, near Leeds, and was baptized in Bardsey Church on the 10th of February 1669-70. His father being an officer in the army, and stationed in Ireland,

he was educated at Kilkenny and Trinity College, Dublin, whence he was admitted to the Middle Temple on the 17th of March 1690-1. His first play, *The Old Bachelor*, acted at Drury Lane in 1692-3, was highly successful, and through the patronage of Halifax he obtained a place in the Pipe Office, and another in the Customs, worth about £600 a year. *The Double Dealer* and *Love for Love*, produced in 1695, were followed, in 1697, by *The Mourning Bride*. In 1698 Congreve was attacked by Collier for the "immorality and profaneness" of his Comedies; and though he affected to despise his assailant, yet the apology he put forward for himself and the ill-success (in spite of its wit) of *The Way of the World* (1700), show what a change had been wrought in the public taste. He made no further appearance upon the stage as a comic or tragic poet, but continued to lead an easy life in the midst of aristocratic and literary acquaintance. When the Whigs came into power in 1714, he was appointed Secretary for the Island of Jamaica, which made his sinecure emoluments worth about £1200 a year. He died on the 19th of January 1728-9, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

The Mourning Bride is a tragedy similar in class to Dryden's *Don Sebastian*, but not disfigured by the comic scenes which debase that play. Its general merits have perhaps been under-rated, in consequence of the exaggerated praise bestowed by Johnson on the celebrated lines describing a cathedral. Many of the incidents are, no doubt, violently improbable; but the action is not uninteresting, and the female characters are dramatically conceived; it is also extremely well written. One of the scenes—that in the cathedral between Almeria and Osmyn, or Alphonso, husband of the former, whom she believes to have been drowned—is genuinely pathetic; and the gusts of contrary emotions that sweep through the soul of Zara, who is in love with the captive Osmyn, are admirably portrayed. Zara's character is thus painted by the man she loves:—

This woman has a soul
Of godlike mould, intrepid and commanding,

And challenges, in spite of me, my best
Esteem; to this she's fair; few more can boast
Of personal charms, or with less vanity
Might hope to captivate the heart of kings.
But she has passions which outstrip the wind,
And tear her virtues up, as tempests root
The sea. I fear, when she shall know the truth,
Some swift and dire event of her blind rage
Will make all fatal.[1]

Declaimed by Mrs. Barry or Mrs. Bracegirdle, the outbursts of this passionate spirit must have been strongly affecting, as may be judged from the following extract.—

OSMYN. What would you from a wretch who came to mourn,
And only for his sorrows chose this solitude?
Look round; joy is not here, nor cheerfulness,
You have pursued misfortune to its dwelling;
Yet look for gaiety and gladness there.
ZARA. Inhuman! why, why dost thou rack me thus,
And with perverseness from the purpose answer?
What is't to me this house of misery?
What joy do I require? If thou dost mourn
I come to mourn with thee; to share thy griefs,
And give thee for them, in exchange, my love.
OSMYN. O that's the greatest grief!—I am so poor,
I have not wherewithal to give again.
ZARA. Thou hast a heart, though 'tis a savage one;
Give it me as it is; I ask no more
For all I've done, and all I have endured;
For saving thee when I beheld thee first,
Driven by the tide upon my country's coast,
Pale and expiring, drenched in briny waves,
Thou and thy friend, till my compassion found thee;
Compassion! scarce will't own that name, so soon,
So quickly was it love; for thou wast god-like,
Even then. Kneeling on earth, I loosed my hair,
And with it dried thy watery cheeks, then chafed
Thy temples, till reviving blood arose,
And like the morn vermilioned o'er thy face.
O Heaven! how did my heart rejoice and ache,
When I beheld the day-break of thine eyes,
And felt the balm of thy respiring lips![2]

(2) *The Mourning Bride* was not free from the kind of rants which Buckingham had satirised in *The Rehearsal*;

[1] *The Mourning Bride*, Act iii. Sc. v. [2] *Ibid.* Act ii. Sc. ix.

nor did these escape the penetrating malice of Collier, who by no means confined himself to rebuking "immorality and profaneness." He ridicules, and with justice, the passage beginning—

> Ha! prostrate! bloody! headless! O! start eyes!
> Split heart! burst every vein! at this dire object.

And his jests as well as his serious protests told on public opinion. Mrs. Bowman speaking the Epilogue to *Boadicea, Queen of Britain*, a play produced in 1697, says:—

> Once only smutty jests could please the town,
> But now (heaven help our trade!) they'll not go down.[1]

The Court itself interfered on behalf of morality. By the Proclamation of Queen Anne of the 17th of January 1703-4, no one was allowed to go behind the scenes; no woman to wear a mask; no one to have a seat for which they had not paid the established price. All these were signs of the times, and obliged the dramatists to restrain their licence and alter the character of their plays. From the wild extravagances of the Caroline era, they turned to imitating the tamer and more decorous manner of the French tragedians. Racine was, of course, the object of their particular attention. In 1699 T. Boyer adapted the *Iphigenie* of the latter under the title, *Achilles or Iphigenia in Aulis*; and in 1707 Edmund ("Rag") Smith's *Phædra and Hippolytus*, a play combined from Racine's *Phèdre* and *Bajazet*, was produced at the Haymarket. Following on the same lines Ambrose Philips, by a very slight transformation, altered Racine's *Andromaque* into his own *Distrest Mother*, which was acted at Drury Lane in 1712.

The new style was warmly supported, out of friendship or party spirit, by the little Whig coterie surrounding Addison. Before the appearance of *The Distrest Mother*, for example, the following eulogistic advertisement, written by Steele, appeared in *The Spectator*:—[2]

[1] Genest, *History of the Stage*, vol. ii. p. 118. [2] No. 290.

They (the players) desired my friend Will Honeycomb to bring me to the reading of the new tragedy; it is called *The Distrest Mother*. I must confess, though some days are passed since I enjoyed that entertainment, the passions of the several characters dwell strongly upon my imagination; and I congratulate the age that they are at last to see truth and human life represented in the incidents which concern heroes and heroines. The style of the play is such as becomes those of the first education, and the sentiments worthy those of the highest figure.

Addison had previously done all he could to promote the success of *Phædra and Hippolytus*, for which he wrote the prologue. When the play was coldly received, he ascribed its ill-success to the bad taste of the audience; but the French style never took hold on the English imagination, and the practical failure both of Smith's play and *The Distrest Mother*, may be ascribed to other causes than those imputed by partial critics. Steele, for example, in his paper on Philips' tragedy, says:—

My friend, Will Honeycomb, commended several tender things that were said, and told me they were very genteel; but whispered me that he feared the piece was not busy enough for the present taste.[1]

This criticism is philosophically expanded in Johnson's remarks on *Phædra and Hippolytus*:—

Addison has, in the *Spectator*, mentioned the neglect of Smith's tragedy as disgraceful to the nation, and imputes it to the fondness for opera then prevailing. The authority of Addison is great; yet the voice of the people, when to please the people is the purpose, deserves regard. In this question I cannot but think the people in the right. The fable is mythological, a story which we are accustomed to reject as false; and the manners are so distant from our own that we know them not from sympathy, but by study; the ignorant do not understand the action; the learned reject it as a schoolboy's tale—*incredulus odi*. What I cannot for a moment believe, I cannot for a moment behold with interest or anxiety. The sentiments thus remote from life ar removed yet further by the diction, which is too luxuriant an splendid for dialogue, and envelopes the thoughts rather th

[1] *Spectator*, No 290.

displays them. It is a scholar's play, such as may please the reader rather than the spectator; the work of a vigorous and elegant mind, accustomed to please itself with its own reflections, but of little acquaintance with the course of life.[1]

Here we find a trenchant explanation of the difference between French and English dramatic taste; the English have always looked in the first place to the action and character of a play, the French (at least under the Monarchy) to its sentiment and diction. The English dramatists have accordingly frequently resorted to the history of their own country for their subjects, instinctively following the principle of Aristotle, that an audience will more readily believe what it knows to have happened. The French Monarchical poets, with more polish but with less love of liberty, have avoided national themes, as likely to induce prohibitions from authority, and have thrown all their skill into the exhibition of psychological conflicts in more or less abstract situations. The strong reaction in England against the violence of the Caroline drama, as well as the growing sense of critical refinement, naturally encouraged dramatic experiments on our stage in the French style; but these were rarely successful, unless aided by exceptional conditions in the state of party politics. The most brilliant example of such success is, of course, furnished by the fortunes of Addison's *Cato*.

Cato was produced at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, on the 13th of March 1713, with an effect which is best described in Pope's well-known letter to Trumbull of the 30th of April 1713:—

The numerous and violent claps of the Whig party on the one side of the theatre were echoed back by the Tories on the other; while the author sweated behind the scenes with concern to find their applause proceeding more from the hand than the head. This was the case, too, with the Prologue-writer, who was clapped into a staunch Whig at the end of every two lines. I believe you have heard that after all the applauses of the opposite faction, my Lord Bolingbroke sent for Booth, who played Cato, into the box, between one of the acts, and presented him with fifty

[1] *Lives of the Poets: Edmund Smith.*

guineas, in acknowledgment, as he expressed it, for defending the cause of liberty so well against a perpetual dictator. The Whigs are unwilling to be distanced this way, and, therefore, design a present to the same Cato very speedily; in the meantime they are getting ready as good a sentence as the former on their side; so betwixt them it is possible that Cato (as Dr. Garth expresses it), may have something to live upon after he dies.

When the applause of the hand ceased, the criticism of the head had its turn, and delivered itself in the strictures of Dennis (they are preserved in Johnson's *Life of Addison*), with some justice, much humour, and more violence. There is no reply possible to Dennis's demonstration of the absurdities arising out of Addison's adherence in *Cato* to the French principle of Unity of Place. Had he not been so absorbed in labouring this point, Dennis might, indeed, have added that the dramatist does not attain to the French standard of Unity of Action. *Cato* is, in fact, a striking illustration of Johnson's epigram, that Whiggism consists in negation; the object of all the characters in it, and the result of every situation, seem to be, how not to act. Cato calls the Senate together at Utica to consider what is to be done, but the only effect of their deliberation is, that they must not receive Cæsar's terms; the two heroines find excellent reasons why they cannot admit their lovers' addresses: the lovers on their side cannot advance because each is in the other's way: the two conspirators, Syphax and Sempronius, after endless elaboration of plots, find them all end in smoke, because their fellow-conspirators will not support them: Cato dies, since the sole solution of the political problem seems to be that he cannot live. Everything is, in fact, talked about, but nothing done. On the other hand the talking is often excellent. If sentiment and elegant diction can make amends for defective action, few plays are richer than *Cato* in sentences like the following:—

'Tis not in mortals to command success
But we'll do more, Sempronius, we'll deserve it,[1]
So shall we gain still one day's liberty;

[1] *Cato*, Act i. Sc. 2.

And let me perish, but in Cato's judgment,
A day, an hour, of virtuous liberty
Is worth a whole eternity of bondage.[1]

Honour's a sacred tie, the law of kings,
The noble mind's distinguishing perfection,
That aids and strengthens virtue when it meets her,
And imitates her action where she is not:
It ought not to be sported with.[2]

How beautiful is death, when earned by virtue!
Who would not be that youth? what pity is it
That we can die but once to serve our country![3]

(3) While this attempt was being made to naturalise a dramatic style of exotic growth, a parallel movement—equally indicative of exhausted invention—was going on, whereby the action and incident of the old English drama was transformed to suit the conditions of eighteenth-century taste. Of this tendency the most notable landmark is *The Fair Penitent*. Nicholas Rowe, the author of the play, a member of an old Devonshire family, was born at Little Barford, Bedfordshire, in 1674. He was elected King's Scholar at Westminster in 1688, and while at school read, for his own amusement, a large amount of English literature, including ballads, plays, and romances. He was called to the Bar as a member of the Middle Temple in 1689. Having inherited from his father John Rowe, a barrister, a fortune of £300 a year, he was in easy circumstances, and seems to have become a playwright from inclination. His first tragedy *The Ambitious Stepmother*, acted in 1700, was followed by *Tamerlane* in 1702, *The Fair Penitent* in 1703, and *Ulysses* in 1706. His last three plays, *The Royal Convert* (1707), *Jane Shore* (2nd February 1713-14), *Lady Jane Grey* (20th April 1715) show an increasing disposition to rely on English historical subjects. He died on the 6th of December 1718, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

The Fair Penitent is an unblushing plagiarism, in respect of its plot and characters, from Massinger's *Fatal*

[1] *Cato*, Act ii. Sc. 1. [2] *Ibid.* Act ii. Sc. 5. [3] *Ibid.* Act iv. Sc. 3.

Dowry, one of the most characteristic plays of that fine and impressive dramatist. Written in an age which had not yet lost the poetry of the old tradition, *The Fatal Dowry* carries in every line the stamp of its creator's personality. It is the work of a man penetrated with a sense of the corruption of manners in a degenerate court, and determined to hold up before his contemporaries a lofty ideal of thought and action. After Massinger's custom the plot, founded on an incident in Burgundian history, is carefully constructed so as to lead up to the concluding moral. Charalois, a valiant but impoverished gentleman of Burgundy, allows himself to be imprisoned —as he expects—for life, in order to procure the burial of his father, a brave marshal, whose body has been seized by his rapacious creditors in consequence of Charalois' inability to discharge his father's debts. Struck by his filial piety, Rochfort, chief justice of the Parliament, satisfies the marshal's creditors, makes Charalois his heir, and bestows on him in marriage the hand of his daughter, Beaumelle. Beaumelle, however, has been corrupted by the fashionable immorality of the day, and, being in love with a certain Novali, keeps up a secret intrigue with him, as her *cavalier servente*, after her marriage. Charalois discovers the adultery, and having killed Novali in a duel, refers the conduct of his wife for judgment to Rochfort, her father, by whom she is pronounced guilty, and acknowledging the justice of her sentence, is put to death by her husband. The latter is himself brought to trial for killing Novali. Though acquitted by the Court, he is almost immediately stabbed by a friend of Novali, and dies, admitting that he is justly punished by Heaven for making himself the private prosecutor of crimes that ought to have been avenged by the law.

Such was the treatment of the story in the hands of a truly dramatic poet. Though the incidents of the play, as is common with Massinger, are somewhat violent, each stage of the action is most carefully thought out; the characters are vividly conceived and represented; and the

diction, if sometimes obscure, is solemn and lofty. When the play came into the hands of Rowe the whole theatrical atmosphere was changed. There would, indeed, in any case have been small likelihood of that dramatist's theft from Massinger being detected, for the plays of the latter had little to recommend them to the playgoers of the Restoration period, and *The Fatal Dowry* had long disappeared from the stage. But Rowe's handling of the subject is so different from that of his predecessor as to be almost original. The entire interest of *The Fair Penitent* is thrown into the person of Calista—the counterpart of Massinger's Beaumelle—in behalf of whom a sentimental interest is excited. She is represented as having been seduced in an unguarded moment by Lothario (the Novali of Massinger), to whom she is still fondly attached, and as having been forced by her father to marry Altamont (Charalois) against her will. The latter discovers her during an interview (not a guilty one) with Lothario, and kills the lover after the manner of the original play. For the rest the opening of the fifth act will furnish a good example of Rowe's intention and of his style.

SCENE.

A room hung with black; on one side LOTHARIO'S *body on a bier; on the other a table, with a skull and other bones,*[1] *a book and a lamp on it.* CALISTA *is discovered on a couch in black, her hair hanging loose and disordered; after music and a song she rises and comes forward.*

[*Song.*]

CALISTA. 'Tis well! these solemn sounds, this pomp of horror,
Are fit to feed the frenzy in my soul;
Here's room for meditation ev'n to madness,
Till the mind burst with thinking. This dull flame
Sleeps in the socket. Sure the book was left
To tell me something;—For instruction then!
He teaches holy sorrow, and contrition,
And penitence;—Is it become an art then?
A trick that lazy, dull, luxurious gownmen
Can teach us to do over? I'll no more on't.

[1] This favourite idea of the tragic skull may be traced back as far as Dekker's *Honest Whore.* See vol. iv. pp. 225, 252.

[*Throwing away the book.*]

I have more real anguish in my heart
Than all their pedant discipline e'er knew.
What charnel has been rifled for these bones?
Fie! this is pageantry; they look uncouthly.
But what of that, if he or she that owned 'em,
Safe from disquiet sit, and smile to see
The farce their miserable relicts play?
But here's a sight is terrible indeed;
Is this that haughty, gallant, gay Lothario,
That dear perfidious—Ah! how pale he looks!
How grim with clotted blood, and those dead eyes!
Ascend ye ghosts, fantastic forms of night,
In all your different dreadful shapes ascend
And match the present horror if you can.

Sciolto (Rochfort), her father, enters and forgetting apparently that he has had a main share in the situation by forcing Calista into a marriage against her will presents her with a dagger, suggesting that she must use it against herself, in order to expiate her loss of honour before her marriage. He then leaves her, and is killed by the partisans of Lothario; Calista, hearing the tidings, despatches herself as a parricide, having first told Altamont:

Such is thy truth, thy tenderness, and love,
Such are the graces that adorn thy youth.
That were I not abandoned to destruction,
With thee I might have lived for ages blest,
And died in peace within thy faithful arms.

Altamont has, in fact, none of the qualities of his lofty-minded prototype, Charalois. Rowe has suppressed the dramatic scene of the original play, in which Charalois gains the affections of Rochfort (and so the hand of Beaumelle) by the generous sacrifice of his own liberty to his father's creditors. In *The Fair Penitent* Altamont appears simply as the injured, but still tender and lachrymose husband, and the blunt fidelity of his friend Horatio, the Romont of Massinger, is equally emasculated as compared with his original.

From this it will be rightly divined that Rowe constructed his play solely for the sake of its theatrical

situations, and the opportunities it offered to an accomplished actress. In point of sentiment, it is better adapted than *The Fatal Dowry* to move female emotion, and women were now the most important part of the audience. Massinger's diction is sometimes gross in the extreme; such a character, for example, as the waiting-woman, Bellapert, who is dramatically necessary for the moral evolution of the old drama, would not have been tolerated in the reign of Queen Anne. Nor indeed would the part of Beaumelle herself (quite a subordinate one in *The Fatal Dowry*) have pleased her own sex. But sentimentalised in the person of Calista, and graced with the smoothly eloquent blank verse of which Rowe was a master, the character became a favourite one with the actresses of the eighteenth century, proving especially effective in the hands of Mrs. Siddons. All these concurrent circumstances help to account for the injustice of time, and to explain why *The Fair Penitent* should so long have held possession of the stage, while the far greater performance of Massinger was neglected.

The insincerity of Rowe's dramatic revival is differently illustrated in his *Tamerlane*. Remembering the violent hero of Marlowe, it is indeed strange, at first sight, to meet with the Scythian shepherd transformed into a mild constitutional monarch, and favourably contrasted with his despotic rival Bajazet; but we understand the change when we find that the latter is intended to be the representative of Louis XIV., while Tamerlane reminds the poet of—among all people in the world!—William III.

> Some people [says Rowe] (who do me a very great honour in it) have fancied that in the person of *Tamerlane* I have alluded to the greatest character of the present age. I don't know whether I ought not to apprehend a great deal of danger from avowing a design like that. It may be a task indeed worthy of the greatest genius which this or any other time has produced. But therefore I ought not to stand the shock of a parallel, lest it should seem to my disadvantage, how far the hero has transcended the poet's thought. There are many features 'tis true in that great man's life, not unlike his Majesty's: his courage, his piety, his moderation, his fatherly love of his people, but above all his

hatred of tyranny and oppression, and his zealous care for the common good of mankind, carry a large resemblance of him.

In my opinion by much the best of Rowe's poetic dramas is *Jane Shore*. Here he has relied throughout on his own invention; and the complication of passions involved in the relations between Hastings, Jane Shore, and her jealous rival, Alicia, is made really interesting. The parting interview between Hastings and Alicia shows this poet's style at his best:—

HASTINGS. One thing I had forgot.
I charge thee, by our present common miseries,
By our past loves, if yet they have a name,
By all the hopes of peace, here and hereafter,
Let not the rancour of thy hate pursue
The innocence of thy unhappy friend.
Thou know'st who 'tis I mean; oh! shouldst thou wrong her,
Just Heaven shall double all thy woes upon thee,
And make 'em know no end—Remember this,
As the last warning of a dying man:
Farewell for ever! [*The guards carry Hastings off.*]
ALICIA. For ever? Oh! for ever!
Oh, who can bear to be a wretch for ever!
My rival, too! His last thoughts hung on her.
Shall she be blest, and I be cursed for ever?
No. since her fatal beauty was the cause
Of all my sufferings, let her share my pains:
Let her, like me, of every joy forlorn,
Devote the hour when such a wretch was born;
Like me to deserts and to darkness run,
Abhor the day, and curse the golden sun,
Cast every good and every hope behind,
Detest the works of Nature, loathe mankind;
Like me, with cries distracted fill the air,
Tear her poor bosom, rend her frantic hair,
And prove the torments of the last despair.[1]

In the mouth of a beautiful actress this declamation (in days when the meaning of rhythm was understood) must have been very effective. But comparing it with Shakespeare's *Richard III.*, for example, the reader will again observe the tendency in the eighteenth-century play

[1] *Jane Shore*, Act iv. Sc. 1.

to throw the greater part of the emotional interest into the female parts, and also to make that emotion rhetorical. The latter result is doubtless due to the powerful influence exercised over the dramatist by the actors. It is noticeable that, in *Cato*, the scenes generally close with rhyme; and, in the passage just quoted, the rhyming rants of the Caroline heroic play are mixed with the older blank verse. When *Phædra and Hippolytus* was being rehearsed, Mrs. Oldfield complained to Smith of the flat style of her "going off" speech in one of the acts, and "Rag" is said to have at once struck off an impromptu in rhyme to the actress's satisfaction.[1]

Edward Young and Elijah Fenton continued the revival begun by Rowe, and both approached nearer than he to the spirit of the ancient stage. In *The Revenge* and *Mariamne*, as I have already said, the moral influence of Massinger is visible. Though the plot of the former was perhaps immediately suggested by *Othello*, Young takes care, after the example of Massinger, in *The Duke of Milan*, to give his villain a more adequate motive of revenge than the one which actuated Iago; while Fenton has transferred the doting passion of Sforza for his wife, bodily, from Massinger's play into the Herod of his own *Mariamne*.

(4) A more genuine and successful effort of dramatic invention is seen in Gay's attempt to combine comedy and opera on the English stage. Opera had advanced on an irresistible tide of conquest from Italy to the Northern countries of Europe; but it had not altogether suppressed the liberties of the native composer. France, for instance, had developed a form of opera suited to her national genius.

Signor Baptist Lully [says Addison] acted like a man of sense in this particular. He found the French music ex-

[1] How wider still my growing horrors spread!
My fame, my virtue, nay, my frenzy's fled!
Then view thy wretched blood, imperial Jove,
If crimes enrage you or misfortunes move;
On me your flames, on me your bolts employ—
Me, if your anger spares, your pity should destroy.

tremely defective, and often very barbarous. However, knowing the genius of the people, the humour of their language, and the prejudiced ears he had to deal with, he did not pretend to extirpate the French music and plant the Italian in its stead, but only to cultivate and civilise it with innumerable graces and modulations which he borrowed from the Italian. By this means the French music is now perfect in its kind, and when you say it is not so good as the Italian, you only mean that it does not please you so well; for there is scarce a Frenchman who would not wonder to hear you give the Italian such a preference.[1]

In England the triumph of Italian over English music was at first more complete. The competition between the playhouses was so severe that each tried to outdo the other in the importation of variety. After *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* had been emasculated, and even *Measure for Measure* had been fitted with "musical entertainments,"[2] the managers of the new Haymarket Theatre introduced *Camilla* to English audiences under the most absurd conditions.

The first Italian performer that made any distinguished figure in it [says Cibber] was Valentini, a truly sensible singer of that time, but of a throat too weak to sustain those melodious warblings for which the fairer sex have since idolised his successors. However, this defect was so well supplied by his action that his hearers bore with the absurdity of his singing his first part of Turnus in *Camilla* all in Italian, while every other character was sung and recited to him in English. This I have mentioned to show not only our Tramontane taste, but that the crowded audiences which followed it to Drury Lane might be another occasion of their growing thinner in Lincoln's Inn Fields.[3]

It was a long time before English taste, accustomed to Purcell's style of Opera, which passed immediately from prose to singing, could reconcile itself to recitative;[4] but at last Valentini, Nicolini, and the English singer, Mrs. Tofts, won a complete victory for Italian Opera, and for some time the players of regular comedy seemed to be in danger of altogether losing their livelihood. The expense

[1] *Spectator*, No. 29. [2] Genest's *History*, vol. ii. p. 22.
[3] *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber* (1740), p. 262.
[4] *Spectator*, No. 20.

of Opera, the quarrels between the singers, and the difficulty of varying the musical entertainment, produced a certain reaction in favour of the theatres, and the rage for opera was further counteracted by the political excitement over Sacheverel's trial and by the success of *Cato*. It was, however, indispensable to secure the advantage thus gained by constant efforts after novelty, and perhaps its novelty was the main cause of the favour shown to Gay's *What d'Ye Call It?* which was acted with fair success at Drury Lane on the 23rd of February 1715. This play the poet called a "Tragi-comi-pastoral-farce"; it had a tragic plot, but comic imagery, and relied largely for its effect on parodies of tragic dramas well known to the spectators, such as *The Distrest Mother*, *Cato*, *Venice Preserved*, and *Jane Shore*. But the taste of the audience was also indulged with the addition of music: many airs were intermixed with the action, and among them the charming ballad, "'Twas when the Seas were Roaring." A less successful experiment was made by Gay on the public taste in 1717, when, with the assistance of Pope and Arbuthnot, he produced at Drury Lane *Three Hours after Marriage*, a grossly personal satire on Dr. Woodward, one of the distinguished natural philosophers of the day. This dramatic outrage met with the unqualified condemnation it deserved: it is indeed surprising to find that the performance was tolerated for seven nights.

Having, by this varied experience, taken the measure of his audience, Gay in 1728 embarked upon a new and audacious enterprise. Swift had suggested to him years before to write a Newgate Pastoral, with thieves and pickpockets for interlocutors.[1] Gay judiciously rejected this idea as it was presented to him, but, with rare tact, resolved to make use of it in an operatic form, that is to say, by a revival of the old English form of Opera in which prose dialogue is often mixed with a succession of songs or ballads. Possessing a knowledge of music to an extent uncommon among the poets of his day, he blended the comic dialogues of his Newgate *dramatis*

[1] *Spence's Anecdotes*, p. 159.

personæ with lyrical passages set to well-known tunes. His literary friends were very doubtful whether his play would succeed. Swift did not much like the idea. Pope, Arbuthnot, and Congreve feared that the public would not appreciate the jest. And indeed the fate of the play, when produced at Lincoln's Inn Fields on the 29th of January 1728, for some time hung in the balance. The spectators were puzzled what to think of the opening scenes, in which Mr. and Mrs. Peachum exhibit their disreputable characters; but when Polly Peachum—acted by Lavinia Fenton—sang—

> O ponder well, be not severe,
>   O save a wretched wife,
> For on the rope that hangs my dear
>   Depends your Polly's life—

the charming innocence and *naïveté* of her rendering took the house by storm; the triumph of the piece was complete; the play ran on the stage at Lincoln's Inn Fields for the then unprecedented period of sixty-two nights, and emptied all the rival theatres. On such accidents of personality depends the fortune of plays!

The Beggars' Opera has indeed but little intrinsic merit, either in respect of action, character, or dialogue; its success, as far as this was due to the author, came from Gay's admirable skill in adapting himself to the transient needs of the public taste. Two things, above all, were in his favour: one, the sentimental admiration of the mob for dashing highwaymen, the other, the violence of party spirit in the more polite part of the audience. Those who loved the romance of the road sympathised with the tender relations existing between Macheath and Polly; the politicians, on the other hand, were delighted with the sly strokes at the Court and its favourite ministers, who were represented in the play as being no better than highwaymen. The members of Macheath's gang indeed, pique themselves on their superior generosity:—

JEMMY. The present time is ours, and nobody alive hath more. Why are the laws levelled at us? Are we more dishonest than the

rest of mankind? What we win, gentlemen, is our own by the law of arms and the right of conquest.

JACK. Where shall we find such another set of practical philosophers who, to a man, are above the fear of death?

WAT. Sound men and true.

ROBIN. Of tried courage and indefatigable industry.

NED. Who is there here that would not die for his friend?

HARRY. Who is there here that would betray him for his interest?

MAT. Show me a gang of courtiers that can say as much.[1]

So too in the songs—

When you censure the age
Be cautious and sage,
Lest the courtiers offended should be:
If you mention vice or bribe,
'Tis so pat to all the tribe,
Each cries, That was levelled at me[2]—

Walpole, above all, was generally recognised as the mark of the poet's satire, and everybody knew who was meant when Peachum spoke of "Robin of Bagshot, *alias* Gorgon, *alias* Bluff Bob, *alias* Carbuncle, *alias* Bob Booty."[3] His conjugal infidelity was allegorised in the bigamy of Macheath with Polly Peachum and Lucy Lockit.

(5) When Gay very shortly afterwards attempted to repeat his success in a second play of the same kind called *Polly*, Walpole, who had left him, in spite of *The Beggars' Opera*, in possession of his place, probably thought that he himself had figured long enough as a robber, and got the Lord Chamberlain, the Duke of Grafton, to forbid the performance. Though the prohibition proved extremely advantageous to the poet, who gained about £3000 by subscription for his book, it was injurious to Walpole, whose intervention was, of course, represented by *The Craftsman* as that of an arbitrary tyrant; and when the Lord Chamberlain's action was followed by the introduction of an Excise Bill in 1733, and by the Licensing Act of 1737, the outcries of the Opposition Whigs against the Minister's encroachments

[1] *Beggars' Opera*, Act ii. Sc. 1.
[2] *Ibid.* Act. ii. Sc. 2.
[3] *Ibid.* Act i. Sc. 3.

on liberty at home, and against his feeble policy abroad, became incessant. Thomson, Pope, and Mallet all took the field on behalf of Liberty, which they professed to think in danger. The sentiments of the Opposition were embodied on the stage in *Gustavus Vasa*, a drama written by Henry Brooke, afterwards better known as the author of a novel called *The Fool of Quality*. He was an Irishman, born at Dublin about 1703, and educated at Trinity College, Dublin, where he matriculated in 1720. His play was rehearsed in 1739, but was stopped by the Lord Chamberlain, though it was afterwards allowed to be acted in Dublin under the name of *The Patriot*. The Prologue shows the spirit by which it was animated:—

> Britons, this night presents a State distrest,
> Though brave, yet vanquished, and though great, opprest
> Vile, ravening vultures on her vitals preyed;
> Her peers, her prelates, fell corruption swayed;
> Their rights for power th' ambitious weakly sold,
> The wealthy, poorly, for superfluous gold.
> Hence wasting ills, hence severing factions rose,
> And gave large entrance to invading foes;
> Truth, justice, honour, fled th' infected shore,
> For freedom, sacred freedom, was no more.
> Then, greatly rising in his country's sight,
> Her hero, her deliverer, sprung to light;
> A race of hardy northern sons he led,
> Guiltless of Courts, untainted and unread,
> Whose inborn spirit spurned th' ignoble fee,
> Whose hearts scorned bondage for their hearts were free.
> Ask ye what law their conquering cause confest?
> Great Nature's law, the law within the breast?
> Formed by no art, and to no sect confined,
> But stamped by Heaven upon the unlettered mind.
> Such, such of old, the first-born natives were,
> Who breathed the virtues of Britannia's air;
> Their realm which mighty Cæsar vainly sought,
> For mightier freedom against Cæsar fought,
> And rudely drove the famed invader home,
> To tyrannise o'er polished venal Rome.
> Our bard, exalted in a free-born flame,
> [illegible]
> . . . .
> . . . .
> . . . .
> Ye sons of Freedom, save the friend of man!

However general the poet's moral may have been, the allegory of the drama, as suggested in the opening lines of the Prologue, describing the state of corruption in Sweden, was obviously intended to be applied at home, and Brooke can hardly have been surprised, in view of the attacks the Opposition were making upon Walpole, that the Lord Chamberlain should decline to regard Gustavus Vasa's animated speech to the miners of Dalecarlia as merely historical rhetoric :—

GUSTAVUS. O Liberty! Heaven's choice prerogative!
True bond of law, thou social soul of property,
Thou breath of reason, life of life itself!
For thee the valiant bleed! O sacred Liberty!
Winged from the summer's snare, from flattering ruin,
Like the bold stork you seek the wintry shore,
Leave courts, and pomps, and palaces to slaves,
Cleave to the cold, and rest upon the storm!
Up-borne by thee, my soul disdained the terms
Of Empire—offered at the hands of tyrants!
With thee I sought this favourite soil; with thee
These favourite sons I sought—thy sons, O Liberty!
For even amid the wilds of life you lead them,
Lift their low-raftered cottage to the clouds,
Smile o'er their heaths, and from the mountain top,
Beam glory to the nations!
ALL. Liberty! Liberty!
GUSTAVUS. Are ye not marked, ye men of Dalecarlia?
Are ye not marked, by all the circling world,
As the great stake, the last effort for liberty?
Say, is it not your wealth, the thirst, the food,
The scope and bright ambition of your souls?
Why else have you and your renowned forefathers,
From the proud summit of their glittering thrones
Cast down the mightiest of your *lawful* kings
That dared the bold infringement? What but Liberty,
Through the famed course of thirteen hundred years,
Aloof hath held invasion from your hills,
And sanctified their shade? And will ye, will ye
Bid your high honours stoop to foreign insult,
And in an hour give up to infamy
The harvest of a thousand years of glory?

Brooke, who lived till the 10th of October 1783, is said to have become a Methodist in his latter days.

Gustavus Vasa may be regarded as the expiring flash

in the fire of the English Poetical Theatre. After it appeared no dramas in verse more stirring to the spirit than Johnson's *Irene* or Home's *Douglas*. Looking backward from this point over the great history of our stage, it seems strange that any critic should think that art can be considered as having an independent life of its own, or be separated from the religious, moral, political, and social life of the State which nourished it. For, in the first place, if the development of the English poetical drama be compared with that of the Greek, it will be found that their analogies to each other are of the most striking kind. Both grew up under very similar social conditions; both dwindled in the same kind of social atmosphere. Both were the offspring of religious institutions; both were brought to perfection of form in an age when society had reached a high point of political consciousness; in Athens through the century after the battle of Marathon; in England during the generation that followed the Spanish Armada. Attic tragedy died after the decline of Athens in the fourth century B.C., and with the decay of Greek liberty; English tragedy after the Civil War that destroyed the ecclesiastical and feudal system out of which it grew.

When the question is viewed on its purely artistic side the resemblances in the histories of the two dramas are equally suggestive. In Attica comedy, as more nearly allied to prose, long survived tragedy; the same was the case in England. Again, while Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes, were writing, few of their dramas were brought more than once on the stage.

It was not till the fourth century [says an accurate scholar] that the reproduction of old plays developed into a regular custom. The practice was at first confined to tragedy. This branch of the drama had passed beyond the period of healthy growth, and already showed symptoms of decay. The three great tragic poets of the fifth century had in their several lines exhausted the capabilities of Attic tragedy. Under such circumstances the tendency to fall back upon the old tragedies naturally became more and more frequent.[1]

[1] Haigh, *Attic Theatre*, p. 96.

So in England, when the spirit of the poetic drama decayed after the Civil War, the plays of Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher were constantly revived to supply what was wanting in the inspiration of their successors. Another feature of great interest may also be noted as common to the Greek and English poetical theatres. As the genius of the dramatist declined, the success of plays began to depend more and more on the skill of the actor. The great age of acting at Athens was the generation before the battle of Chæronea; Polus, the Garrick of his day, is said to have taught elocution to Demosthenes; and in England it is not till the drama has passed its grand climacteric that much is told us of the characteristics of the leading performers on the stage. After the appearance of Cibber's *Apology*, Churchill's *Rosciad* marks the great and growing interest in the art of the actor, by which alone the poetry of the stage, as far as any remained to it, was still kept alive.

In performing this conservative task, if the actor was, in one direction, aided by the genius of the poet, in another, he was hindered by the bad taste of the audience. All the great English tragedies being written in verse, he was obliged to make a study of rhythmical declamation, with what effect can be best judged by a lively passage in Colley Cibber's *Apology*:—

There cannot [says that experienced stage critic] be a stronger proof of the charms of harmonious elocution than the many even unnatural scenes and flights of the False Sublime it has lifted into applause. In what raptures have I seen an audience at the furious fustian and turgid rants in Nat Lee's *Alexander the Great!* For though I can allow this play a few great beauties, yet it is not without extravagant blemishes. Every play of the same author has more or less of them. Let me give you a sample from this. Alexander, in a full crowd of courtiers, without being occasionally called or provoked to it, falls into this rhapsody of vainglory—

Can none remember? Yes, I know all must!

(And therefore they shall know it again)

When Glory, like the dazzling eagle, stood
Perched on my beaver in the Granic flood,
When Fortune's self my standard trembling bore,
And the pale Fates stood frighted on the shore,
When the immortals on the billows rode,
And I myself appeared the leading god.

When these flowing numbers came from the mouth of a Betterton, the multitude no more desired sense to them than our musical connoisseurs think it essential in the celebrated airs of an Italian Opera.

. . . .

If this passage has merit, let us see what figure it would make upon canvas, what sort of picture would rise from it. If Le Brun, who was famous for painting the battles of this hero, had seen this lofty description what one image could he have possibly taken from it? In what colours could he have shown us "Glory perched upon a beaver"? Or, indeed, what use could he have made of "pale Fates," or immortals riding upon billows with this blustering god of his own making at the head of them? Where then must have lain the charm that once made the public so partial to this tragedy? Why, plainly in the grace and harmony of the actor's utterance? For the actor himself is not accountable for the false poetry of his author; that the hearer is to judge of; if it passes upon him the actor can have no quarrel to it; who, if the periods given him are round, smooth, spirited, and high-sounding, even in a false passion, must throw out the same fire and grace as may be required in one justly rising from nature; where those his excellencies will then be only more pleasing in proportion to the taste of his hearer. And I am of opinion that to the extraordinary success of this very play we may impute the [illegible] actors and tragic writers [illegible] The unskilful actor who [illegible] ...ose blazing rants lay only in the strength and strained exertions of the voice, began to tear his lungs upon every false or slight occasion to arrive at the same applause. And it is from hence I date our having seen the same reason prevailing for above fifty years. Thus equally misguided, too, many a barren-brained author has flowed into the frothy flowing style, pompously rolling into sounding periods signifying —roundly nothing; of which number in some of my former labours I am sometimes more than suspicious that I *myself have* made one, but to keep a little closer to Betterton.[1]

[1] *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber.* Chapter iv.

But if the actor was thus able, by the power of his elocution, to command the emotions of his audience through the ear, his own art was at the same time liable to be sacrificed to the lust of the eye. In this respect the history of the English poetic drama differs from that of the Greek.

> The scenery in use upon the Attic stage (says the author I have before cited) was simple in character and limited in amount compared with that employed in a modern theatre. Elaborate set pieces and gorgeous spectacular effects were entirely unknown. The principal expense in the production of a play was the training of the chorus, the payment of the actors, and the supply of suitable dresses. The scenery was never made the prominent feature of the exhibition. . . . It would have been alien to the simplicity of the Attic taste to have allowed the poetry and the acting to be overshadowed by gorgeous spectacles and magnificent decorations. . . . During the earliest period of the drama . . . everything was left to the imagination of the spectators.[1]

So it had been in the great days of the English poetic drama. "Think," says the Prologue to *Henry V.*,

> Think, when we talk of horses, that you see them
> Printing their proud hoofs i' the receiving earth ;
> For 'tis your *thoughts* that now must deck our kings.

But this was lifting the audience above themselves. From the earliest days of the English stage, as I have shown, the spectators largely consisted of an uneducated public, who instinctively demanded to be gratified with imitation of the most realistic kind : it is a sign of the transcendent genius of Shakespeare that he should have been able to turn this tendency to dramatic account in such scenes as that of the grave-diggers in *Hamlet*, and generally in the underplots of his tragi-comedies. But after the Restoration the public taste was diverted into a fresh channel. Davenant introduced the mechanism and properties of the French opera, and the spectators, delighted with a new

[1] Haigh, *Attic Drama*, pp. 164-166.

variety of illusion, soon grew accustomed to require entertainment from the mere sensuous externals of the dramatic art,—gorgeous dresses, pantomime, and even rope-dancing. The actors with difficulty made head against this barbarous tendency. Fortunately the strength of the poetic tradition, their own talents, and the influence of the more refined part of the audience, so effectively aided their efforts that the old poetic plays kept possession of the stage through the eighteenth century. Surviving pictures of the great actors, performing romantic or historical parts in their wigs and modern costume, allow us to perceive that imagination among the spectators of the period must still have been powerful enough to overcome the mere objections of prosaic sense. And the fine appreciation of the points of good acting, exhibited in such a poem as Churchill's *Rosciad*, further shows that the performer of ideal parts might still look for intelligent judges among the audience. Take, for example, the following estimate of Quin, as the representative of the old declamatory style, then just giving place to the "natural" school headed by Garrick:—

> Quin from afar, lured by the scent of fame,
> A stage Leviathan, put in his claim,
> *Pupil of Betterton and Booth.* Alone,
> Sullen he walked, and deemed the chair his own.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> His words were sterling weight, nervous and strong,
> In manly tides of sense they rolled along.
> Happy in art, he chiefly had pretence
> To keep up numbers, yet not forfeit sense.
> No actor ever greater heights could reach
> In all the laboured artifice of speech.
>
> . . . . .
>
> His eyes, in gloomy sockets taught to roll,
> Proclaimed the sullen habit of his soul.
> [illegible]
>
> . . .
>
> Or Rowe's gay rake dependant virtue jeers,
> With the same cast of features he is seen
> To chide the libertine and court the queen.
> From the tame scene which without passion flows,

With just desert his reputation grows:
Nor less he pleased when, on some surly plan,
He was at once the actor and the man.
  In Brute he shone unequalled: all agree
Garrick's not half so great a Brute as he.
When Cato's laboured scenes are brought to view,
With equal praise the actor laboured too;
For still you'll find, trace passions to their root,
Small difference 'twixt the Stoic and the brute
In fancied scenes, as in life's real plan,
He could not, for a moment, sink the man.
In whate'er cast his character was laid,
Self still, like oil, upon the surface played:
Nature, in spite of all his skill, crept in:
Horatio, Dorax, Falstaff—still 'twas Quin.[1]

But of course the judgment of the audience in general was based on a much wider principle. Pope lets us see what this was:—

Booth enters. Hark the universal peal!
"But has he spoken?" Not a syllable.
What shook the stage and made the people stare?
Cato's long wig, flower'd gown, and lacquered chair.

As the public taste was in the days of Cibber, Addison, and Pope, so it continued. One by one the old poetical plays disappeared from the English stage: an atmosphere of prose closed round the theatre, and the actors naturally gave all their attention to developing the capacities of their art under the new conditions. The rhythmical declamation of verse on the stage is now practically a lost accomplishment. From time to time the plays of Shakespeare are reproduced, but—judging from the amount of attention given to particular points in the exhibition—not for the sake of their poetry. What attracts the audience in them is the element of picturesque illusion, for which—in common with every Christmas pantomime—almost all of them afford opportunities. Old-world towns, shipwrecks, delightful gardens, moonlight effects, and mediæval costumes, transport the spectator for a moment out of the work-a-day world:

[1] *The Rosciad.*

the poet and the actor modestly retire into the background, and the scene-painter enjoys an almost undivided triumph over the modern imagination

But though in the eighteenth century the form of the poetic drama vanished, its life was not lost, but only changed. In the ceaseless movement of national imagination, the dramatic form had gradually evolved itself out of the ancient *roman*, or *fabliau*; and now, in its course of circular migration, the spirit of the drama reappeared in the body of the modern Novel. It is a curious and significant fact that almost the last of the old-fashioned dramatists of England should have been the first, and in many respects the greatest, of her novelists. Fielding began his career by writing (in 1730) for the stage his mock-heroic *Tom Thumb*, a play in which, following the steps of Gay in his *What d'ye Call It?* he sought to amuse his audience by parodying the tragic style of well-known dramas: his *Pasquin* (1736), a dramatic satire on the various corruptions of the age, is said to have contributed in no small measure to the passing of the Licensing Act of 1737. Driven from the theatre, the Genius of English invention transferred the love of adventurous action, the powerful delineation of character, the faithful portraiture of manners—qualities acquired by the discipline of a hundred and fifty years on the freest stage in Europe—into the pages of *Tom Jones* and *Joseph Andrews*.

CHAPTER XIV

A SURVEY OF ENGLISH POETRY IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

A NOTABLE passage in M. Taine's *History of English Literature* runs as follows:—

When we embrace at a glance the vast literary region which in England extends from the Restoration of the Stuarts to the French Revolution, we perceive that all its products, independently of their English character, bear the classic imprint, and that this imprint, peculiar to that region, is not met with either in the period which precedes or in that which follows. * * *

There is no class of literature in which the phenomenon is more manifest than in poetry, and there is no moment at which it appears more clearly than in the reign of Queen Anne. The poets in that age succeed in attaining the art of which they previously only had glimpses. For sixty years they have been approaching it: now they grasp it, handle it, use, and exaggerate it. Their style is at once finished and artificial. Open the first comer, Parnell or Philips, Addison or Prior, Gay or Tickell, and you find in each a certain turn of wit, of versification, of language. Pass to the second, the same turn reappears; it may almost be said that one has copied the other. Skim the poems of a third: there is the same diction, the same apostrophes, the same manner of placing the epithet, and rounding the period. Dip into the works of the whole troop: with some small individual differences they seem all of them cast in the same mould; one is more of an epicurean, another more of a moralist, a third more of a wit; but everywhere you feel the reign of noble language, oratorical pomp, classic correctness; the substantive is attended by its groom-in-waiting, the adjective; the symmetrical architecture is balanced by antithesis; the verb, as in Lucan and Statius, displays itself flanked by a noun garnished with its epithet; the verse may be said to have been turned out of a machine, so

uniform is its structure; we forget what it means to say; we are tempted to count its syllables on our fingers; we know beforehand with what poetic ornaments it will be decorated. It has a theatrical dress, oppositions, allusions, mythologic elegances, reminiscences of Greek or Latin. It has a scholastic solidity, sententious maxims, philosophic platitudes, moral developments, oratorical exactness. You might fancy yourself to be before a natural family of plants; though they differ in size, colour, accidental appearances, and names, yet at bottom there is no variation in the type; the stamens are equal in number, inserted in the same way, about similar pistils, and above leaves arranged on the same plan; whoever knows one knows all the others; there is a common organism and structure which carries with it the character of all the tribe. If you run over the family you will find there, without doubt, some striking plant which shows the type in its fullest development, while in the [illegible] way, here, we see the classical style finding its centre in the neighbourhood of Pope, and particularly in Pope himself, then half effacing itself, mixing itself with foreign elements, and finally disappearing in the poetry which succeeded it.[1]

I have translated the above passage in full because it obviously runs counter to the view of English Poetry in the eighteenth century which has been presented in this volume. It deserves also to be put side by side with the passage I have previously cited from M. Taine,[2] as an illustration of the virtues and defects of the bird's-eye-view method of writing literary history. M. Taine deals in the same summary fashion with the "classical" period of English Literature as, in the other case, he dealt with the literature of the *Middle Ages*. Applying his critical principles to his own History, it may be said that by "embracing at a glance," "skimming" and "dipping into" a number of works in a given literary period, an intelligent critic may readily form a rough generalisation of its characteristics, which shall be brilliant, suggestive, and in many respects true. But unless he is also prepared,

[1] Translated from Taine's *Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise*, iv. 175-178.

[2] Preface to vol. i. pp. xv-xvii.

to the best of his ability, to sink his own personality, to study individual authors judicially, and to sympathise, for the time being, with the spirit of their age, it is certain that the total result of his generalisation will be false and misleading. I am well aware that much can be justly said against any method of inductive criticism; but M. Taine's system, with its disregard of dates and details, and its constant reference of all points to the critic's own perceptions, as an absolute standard of taste, is apt to do exceptional injustice to the authors—and particularly to the poets—on whose merits he puts a valuation.[1]

What critic, for example, who has breathed the genuine air of the eighteenth century in England, would take Ambrose Philips as a representative poet of that age? Who, that appreciates the true genius of Prior, could suppose that, in his really characteristic work, he "copied" either from Addison or Pope? In what sense can it be justly said that, in Pope's most vivid compositions, such as the *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, "the verb displays itself, flanked by a noun garnished with its epithet?" Is there any real likeness between the style of *The Vanity of Human Wishes* or *The Deserted Village* and that of *The Essay on Man?* How could the versification of *The Seasons*, *Night Thoughts*, or *The Bard* be compressed into the mould of classic diction described by M. Taine? These are questions which, I venture to say, on M. Taine's principles cannot be answered in such a way as to justify his generalisation.

When we examine this generalisation in detail we find, in the first place, that M. Taine uses the word "classic" to signify mere formal imitation of the external manner of ancient authors. Just as Chiabrera may be called "classic," in so far as he often copies closely in Italian the structure of Pindar's Greek Odes, and Fulvio Testi, in so far as he strives to imitate the manner of Horace, so is M. Taine right in saying that the Latin style of Statius is

[1] These remarks are limited to M. Taine's strictures on a language and literature which are not his own. As applied to the *Ancien Régime* of France his inductive method seems to me equally scientific and admirable.

reproduced in poems like Pope's *Messiah*, in his Translation of the *Iliad*, and in Pitt's Translation of the *Æneid*. It is no less the case that there are many English poems, written towards the end of the eighteenth century, of the same order as Erasmus Darwin's *Botanic Garden*, in which so much attention has been given to obtaining a "classic" form, that "we forget what each poem *means to say; we are tempted to count its syllables on* our fingers; we know beforehand with what poetic ornaments it will be decorated." But when M. Taine tries to apply this rule to what is really characteristic in the poetry of the English "classic age," he soon finds that the facts will not square with his theory. Seeing this, he acknowledges it honestly. "When we pass in review," he says, "*all the file of English poets in the eighteenth century*, we perceive that they do not accommodate themselves readily to the classic dress."[1] Again: "This incongruity goes on increasing, and attentive eyes quickly discover, under the environment of regularity, the presence of an energetic and precise imagination which tends to rend it asunder."[2] And (speaking of Thomson's *Seasons*): "All this is difficult to be put within the gilded classic frame."[3]

To English eyes very little "attention" is required to discover that, for our truly representative national poets in the eighteenth century, the formal classic framework, defined by M. Taine, does not exist at all. But supposing him to be right in his observation, as to the effect of the Classical Renaissance on our poetry, it is difficult to see how this can have been an expression of the vehement political spirit which he also finds in the England of the *eighteenth century*. *How could* verse marked with the tame uniformity ascribed by him to the "classic age," have reflected the spirit of a people excellently portrayed as follows:—

The life of politics, like the life of religion, abounds and

[1] Translated from *Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise*, vol. IV. p. 215.
[2] *Ibid* vol. IV. p. 218. [3] *Ibid*. vol. IV p. 225.

overflows [in the Classic Age], and its explosions only make the force of the inward fire more noticeable. The fury of parties in the State, as well as in the Church, is a proof of zeal; the abiding tranquillity in other countries is but the result of general indifference; and if the people fight at elections, it is because they are interested in elections. In England, for example, a tiler carries up a newspaper to read on the roofs, and a foreigner, reading the journals, might fancy the country to be on the eve of a revolution. If the Government make a mistake, the public feels itself involved in it; its own honour and welfare are in the hands of the Minister to dispose of, and woe to the Minister if he disposes of them ill.[1]

Again, in his description of the character of English poetry in the "classic age," M. Taine makes no allowance for the influence of historic continuity, which has operated so powerfully both in our politics and our literature. "All the products of this period," he says, "independently of their English character, bear the classic imprint . . . not met with either in the period which precedes or in that which follows."

I think we may see here the root of M. Taine's fallacy. He divides his History into ages, separated from each other by trenchant characteristics, like a line-of-battleship divided into water-tight compartments. He observes that the predominance of the heroic couplet *is* in England a characteristic of the "classic age"; and since in France the rules of "classic" poetry were dictatorially prescribed between the time of Malherbe and the time of Voltaire, he believes that something of the same kind happened in England between the generation of Waller and that of Pope. It is perhaps not wonderful that M. Taine should have been led to this conclusion by the constant assertions of Dryden and other English critics, that Waller was the first English poet to write harmonious verse. But as to its truth, in the first place, the English classic tradition was begun, long before the Restoration, by Drayton, Drummond, Sandys, and Sir John Beaumont; in the second place, it was continued long after the commencement of the French Revolution by Campbell, Rogers, Crabbe, and—in an expanded form—by Byron himself; in the third place, the

[1] *Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise*, vol. iii. pp. 320-321.

character of the transition from Classicism to Romanticism in the eighteenth century is clearly marked in the poetry of Gray and Collins, which combines features of the Classic Renaissance with features of the Middle Ages. Even the poetic forms used by Burns, whom M. Taine regards as the Avatar of the cosmopolitan modern or democratic spirit, may be observed, germinally, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, in *The Gentle Shepherd* of Allan Ramsay, and afterwards in the poems of Fergusson. Wherever, in fact, we find in English Poetry the full river of artistic expression, we may, if we explore patiently discover the infant springs.

As the authors of the political Revolution of 1688 were careful to maintain the continuity of national life by unfailing reference to precedent, so the English poets of the same period, while correcting their modes of expression by a classical standard, never departed abruptly from inherited traditions. The heroic couplet, naturalised in the language since the time of Chaucer, was gradually modified by many generations of verse-writers; but in the practice of these poets there is a striking absence of the uniformity imagined by M. Taine; the metre being employed by them for a great variety of purposes, and with such differences of method as were required for the expression of individual thought and character. The same features are repeated in our blank verse. This, though it has a history of its own, is an off-shoot of the heroic rhyming couplet, and though the line of its descent in the eighteenth century is clearly traceable from Milton, the extracts I have given from Thomson, Young, Akenside, and Cowper show the most complete individuality of thought and style in the poets who use it.

For these reasons it seems to me that the account M. Taine gives of English poetry in the eighteenth century cannot be accepted. I think with him that this century may justly be called the "classic age" of English literature. But as I said in the first chapter of this volume, the classic form is nothing unless inspired by the classic spirit—the spirit of Greek and Roman antiquity,—the essence of which

is civic liberty. That is the spirit which animates our literature in the period following the Revolution of 1688. Through the seventeenth century the Renaissance maintained a doubtful struggle with the literary traditions of Ecclesiasticism and Feudalism. The Revolution ended in a compromise between the three principles, a compromise in which the Renaissance, identifying itself always more closely with the organic structure of the nation's life, became predominant, while the other two elements were proportionately depressed. But the latter were far from being destroyed. There is, as M. Taine admirably shows, a very powerful infusion in the English classic age of the feudal spirit.

> The people of this country, (he says, speaking of Thomson's *Seasons*) have always been more feudal and rural in their tastes than we. Under Louis XIV. and Louis XV. the worst misfortune that could befall a man of gentle birth was to go and rust on his estates; away from the smiles of the king and the witty conversation of Versailles, it only remained for him to yawn and die. In England, in spite of artificial civilisation and the requirements of fashion, the taste for hunting and physical exercises, political interests and electioneering necessities, call away the nobles to their country seats.[1]

He also shows that the Ecclesiastical spirit, whether derived from Catholic or from Protestant scholasticism, was a powerful element in the England of the "classic age." These spiritual agents, working together, went to make up the political character that stamps itself on every page of eighteenth-century literature. At no other stage of the history of England is the influence of the πολιτικὴ παιδεία—the living source, as I have attempted to show, of whatever is most valuable in Greek and Roman antiquity[2]—so visible as at this period. And out of the English political spirit was developed in English poetry the classical form.

Superficially no doubt, that form was shaped and determined by the study of classical art and literature

[1] Translated from *Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise*, vol. iv. p. 222.

[2] See vol. i. pp. 14-24.

—and for an excellent reason. The art of the "classic age" in England adapted itself to the taste of a ruling aristocracy, educated and nurtured on the ideals of the Renaissance. From the dawn of the new European civilisation, these tastes had been propagated by scholars with the encouragement of kings and princes. English noblemen like Burlington, Bathurst, and Cobham, were versed in the science of classic architecture; Walpole (rustic as he was) loved, with understanding, the Italian painters of the Renaissance; Somers, Halifax, Carteret, and Fox were as well read in Greek, Roman, and Italian poets as were the English writers whose business it was to amuse their patrons' leisure. It was only to be expected that imaginative creators of all kinds, working with such models and under such patronage, should reproduce some of the prominent features of ancient art in their own style.

But their style itself was at bottom national. Robust, and at the same time elegant, the classic mould of poetic expression readily conformed to the colloquial turn of the English language, and to the requirements of philosophic thought, so long as the aristocracy exercised the main control over public affairs. When the vigour of oligarchical rule languished, when other parts of the nation began to claim a share in the government, the predominant classical forms of poetic expression ceased to be completely adequate vehicles for the new ideas rising in the national imagination. I have endeavoured in this volume to trace the history of the classical school of our poetry through its gradual development and its no less gradual decline. I have shown how intimately the literary growth was connected with internal change in the political constitution of the country; how strongly what may be called the Whig temper of the English Revolution stamped its character during the first half of the eighteenth century on the form of English verse. As the century advances, the disruption of this system of political compromise is expressed in the sphere of imagination, alike by the decline of satire into a purely factious instrument, and by the anti-Whig sentiment in the didactic poems of Johnson and Goldsmith; at the same

time the ethical spirit, characteristic of poetry in the early part of the century, *shows plain signs of exhaustion.*

Looking at the Revolution Settlement on its religious side, we have seen the external forces by which it was assailed: how the victory of the Latitudinarian party in the Anglican Communion encouraged the assaults of the Deists on Christianity itself; how the exclusion of the Nonjurors and the Dissenters from the sphere of politics tended to turn religious emotion into eccentric spiritual channels, apart from the system of the Established Church; both intellectual movements are clearly reflected, the one in the character of current didactic poetry, the other in the hymnology of the age.

Finally, having regard to the simple question of poetic form, it has been shown that the tendency of constitutional compromise was to restrict the imagination within certain well-defined limits. Independent alike of the Catholic, the Puritan, and the Feudal ideals of life, the spirit of the Classical Renaissance, allying itself with the common sense of the nation at large, sought, by the moderation of its aims, to direct the imagination of the people to points on which all could agree. It avoided the exaggerations of the various parties in the state, but strove to frame a constitution of imaginative life within which each might enjoy a just liberty. In this system of order, while there was a constant effort to attain exactness of expression, no attempt was made to enforce the dictatorial principles of uniformity prescribed by Boileau. The ideals of taste contemplated by *The Spectator* were intended to meet the requirements of a particular condition of society: they did not aim at finality. When they ceased to satisfy social needs, the poetical reformers of a later age, Gray, Collins, and the two Wartons, found no difficulty in expanding them, and in grafting on the classic stems modes of romantic expression, inspired by the reviving mediæval forces at work within the nation.

To sum up: with all its artifices and restrictions, the eighteenth century in England was a constructive, at least a conservative, age. Out of the confusion caused

by fifty years of civil strife the illustrious statesmen and writers who came into the inheritance bequeathed to them by Mediæval Absolutism had to build the social fabric of Constitutional Liberty. The real sovereignty of the country devolved on the aristocracy; and like all vigorous rulers, the great Whig houses sought to concentrate power in their own hands. By their command of the small boroughs, by the limitations of the franchise, by far-reaching political disabilities, and above all, it must also be said, by parliamentary corruption, they contrived for a hundred years to steer a middle course between the personal rule of the monarch and the violence of contending interests. Blunders, confusion, often external defeat, marked the course of the national policy. A coarse and cynical tone pervaded the morals of the governing classes. Nevertheless the character of the nation at large was not corrupted. In spite of their faults the aristocracy, understanding the maxim, *noblesse oblige*, seldom failed to act as leaders of the people, and under their conduct, without any of the aimlessness of a *laissez faire* individualism, the nation, settling down into a new order of constitutional freedom, was trained to enlarge in every direction its capacities for self-government.

The imagination of the people followed the lines of their political development. Setting aside the great names of Shakespeare and Milton, it would be difficult to find, either in the seventeenth or in the nineteenth century, a series of writers, equally numerous, entitled to stand on the same intellectual level with Addison, Prior, Arbuthnot, Swift, Pope, Thomson, Johnson, Goldsmith, Reynolds, Burke, Gray, Collins, Cowper, Fielding, Richardson, Sterne, Berkeley, Butler, Hume, and Gibbon. After the anarchy of the latter half of the seventeenth century, what poets and prose-writers alike aimed at was order, lucidity, refinement, or, as the current phrase went, "correctness" of thought and expression. The lucidity was often accompanied by shallowness, the refinement marred by grossness, the correctness narrowed by prejudice. But whatever its defects, it cannot be denied

that the system of classical taste, formed between the founding of *The Spectator* and the death of Johnson, was in a high degree masculine and characteristic. If, in its desire for law and discipline, it tended to suppress much that was beautiful and romantic in the spiritual history of the nation, it abolished much more that was false, affected, and unwholesome. It had this further merit, that it was formed, not by the imposition of any external standard of authority, but by free debate and discussion. Under it society was taught to reason about ideas. Hence when the new day of Revolution came, and the disfranchised forces of literary imagination and romance demanded admission within the general system of taste, no attempt was made to proscribe them by reference to stereotyped conventions: the appeal was to reason; and challengers and defenders alike had to make their cause good by argument in the face of an educated public opinion.

END OF VOL. V.

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